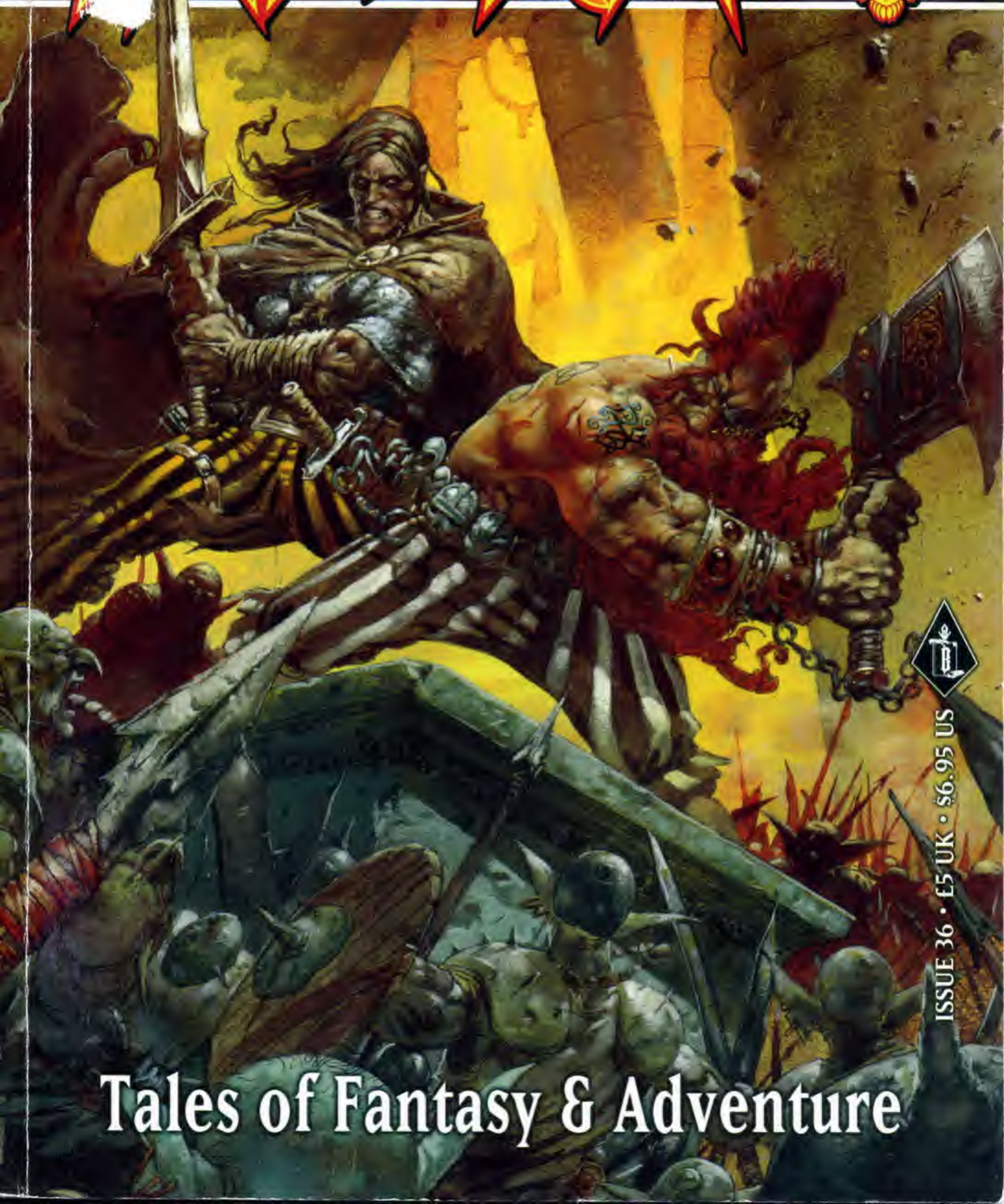


INFERNO!



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Tales of Fantasy & Adventure

INFERNO!

IF I HAD TO think of one word of one word to sum up the Black Library and all the fiction we've produced over the past six years it would be 'action'. From tales of an Imperial Guard regiment whose home planet has been obliterated through to hard-boiled Old World mercenaries and Altdorf sage-detectives the common factor that bonds and defines these works is action. And never has this been truer than in the case of Gotrek & Felix, two characters whose history and exploits this special issue of *Inferno!* is devoted to.

For nigh on a decade and a half our death-seeking dwarf hero and his faithful scribe have been wandering the Empire and beyond in search of worthy foes so that the diminutive Slayer may find an honourable death and gain absolution for his past indiscretions. Now obviously, this sounds like the perfect recipe for action packed tales of war and adventure but the real strength of the Gotrek & Felix novels, often overlooked, lies in the characterisation and motivations of the cast members.

In Gotrek we have a dwarf slayer – a character who lives only to die an honourable death in battle – but, and this is the Slayer series' greatest paradox amongst many – our hero fails at the end of each tale: his success ultimately becomes his failure and the cycle begins anew.

And then there's Felix, the former student and carouser now honour-bound to pen the tale of the dwarf's adventures and, eventually, his demise. His life has been given new definition through Gotrek's relentless pursuit of death.

See also Max Schreiber, who like Felix, was expelled from college – though his dalliance with Chaos makes for a far more sinister reason for expulsion than Felix's over-exuberant duelling – now making his way in the world by fighting against the very forces of darkness that led to his academic career being cut short.

This is just a small selection from the literally hundreds of characters brought to life by William King throughout the seven novels that make up the Gotrek & Felix series (so far) and an editorial this short cannot hope to cover the whole spectrum. Fortunately this issue contains an all-new Gotrek & Felix novella so you don't just have to take my word for it.

But, before the action starts, here are a few words from the man himself.



Christian Dunn,
Editor

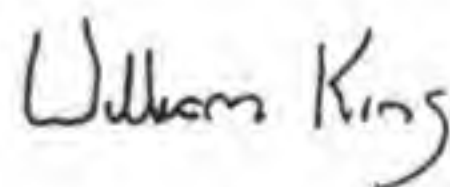
IT'S BEEN almost 15 years since I sat down to write *Geheimnisnacht*, the first

ever Gotrek and Felix story. Little did I dream then that a decade & a half later I would be sitting in a café in Prague writing a guest editorial for a magazine, some of whose readers were not even born when the pair first set out on the treacherous road through the Reikwald.

Since then they have brawled and battled their way across the Old World, from the Empire to the Chaos Wastes and beyond. They've watched great cities burn and powerful daemons manifest. They have appeared in anthologies, novels, Warhammer supplements and now a comic strip. They've even been turned into miniatures, and shown up on t-shirts and watches and even briefly in a computer game (I cannot tell you how surprised I was to encounter Gotrek in *Shadow of the Horned Rat*).

What I set out to do that long gone day was to write a tale about two adventurers let loose in the Warhammer world. Back then I wanted to catch the atmosphere of that dark, ultra-violent yet often strangely humorous place. I still do.

Hopefully the stories you are about to read will take you there too.



William King
Prague
March 2003

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REDHAND'S DAUGHTER

A GOTREK & FELIX ADVENTURE BY WILLIAM KING

1 The Storm

THE DWARF STEAMSHIP *Storm Hammer* crashed through the waves, trailing clouds of smoke and seagulls behind it. Its paddles thrashed the ocean, driving it into the wind with a speed that would have been inconceivable for a sailing ship in these rough seas. In the distance, great thunderheads threatened.

Felix Jaeger leaned against the rail and watched the sea break against the prow. Riding the bow wave a pod of dolphins easily paced the ship, leaping from the water, turning on their backs in mid air to show their bellies before splashing back into the water. Such was their speed that they gave the impression more of flying under water than swimming. Just looking at them made Felix happy, for no reason he could put his finger on. Perhaps it was their faces – something about the shape of their mouths made them seem to smile. It went well with the exuberance of their motion and contrasted directly with the sour expressions of the dwarfs around him.

Felix had never seen a more miserable-looking group, and he had plenty of experience of a race that specialised in gloom. Most of these dwarfs had a slightly greenish tinge. Many had just returned from throwing up over the side. From where Felix stood he could see a line of them hanging over the guardrail, heaving the contents of their stomachs into the sea. Was this why the gulls followed the ship, Felix wondered, doing his best to ignore the retching sounds? To find food?

He understood the dwarfs' misery. During the first few hours out of harbour, when the *Storm Hammer* had hit the rolling swells of the Gulf of Araby, he had felt something of their discomfort himself. He had spent several hours sitting on the cannon turret trying to keep the contents of his stomach firmly in place. The sickness had been as bad as the hangover after a three-day drinking session. Then, as

suddenly as it had come, it passed. He did not exactly feel fine, but he had adjusted. The dwarfs were taking longer about it. It seemed that as a race, they were peculiarly prone to sea-sickness.

Felix recalled reading somewhere that dwarfs, being bound to the elemental affinity of the earth, were unwelcome to the sea gods. That was one theory; another was that the same sensitivity of the inner ear that allowed dwarfs to tell depth and distance so unerringly while underground, made them vulnerable to the rocking motion of ships. Whatever the reason, he was in a position to confirm it was true.

He looked around for Gotrek but the Slayer was nowhere in sight. Doubtless he was down below inspecting the massive engines, or perhaps he had broached a cask of ale and was working his way through it. According to dwarfs, ale was a cure for all ills, particularly seasickness.

Certainly most of the crew capable of going about their business stank of it. Up on the bridge, Captain Ahabsson glugged back a stein with one hand while his hook rested on the wheel. Even as Felix watched, he leaned forward and said something into the speaking tubes. A few seconds later, as if in response, a steam-whistle sounded, its long lonely scream racing outwards over the water, startling the gulls into higher flight. Moments later, a shortbeard – a young dwarf – clambered up the ladder onto the bridge with another jack of ale foaming in his hand. The captain eyed it appreciatively before taking a slug.

Ahabsson pushed a lever beside the wheel, in response the ship picked up speed, smashing through the next wave in a cloud of spray. Wetness splashed Felix's face. He wiped salt water away with the hem of his old red cloak and returned to studying the dolphins.

Oncoming storm or no, he felt glad to be here, glad that the haunted desert lands of Araby, with their fanatical warriors, hollow-eyed prophets and liche-haunted tombs

were falling below the horizon behind them. He had had enough of the mazy cities and teeming bazaars to last him a lifetime. If he never saw them again, it would be too soon. Enough of doomed princesses, treacherous dancing girls and hidden treasures, he thought, and then smiled cynically.

He doubted he and Gotrek would ever stop looking for treasure. Though such quests had never brought them any luck and always ended in a confrontation with huge monsters or wicked magicians, dwarfen gold lust combined with the slayer's doomed quest for death would ensure they followed up every rumour.

He glanced at the black sky ahead, and the huge wave of cloud rushing toward them. Ahabsson sighted his spyglass on the horizon and studied the storm clouds. He raised a huge speaking trumpet to his mouth and bellowed orders.

'Avast ye! Batten down the hatches! Ready the pumps! It looks like a mighty blow be coming!'

Well spotted, thought Felix sourly. The seasick dwarfs heaved themselves upright, wiped their mouths and stomped about their business, grabbing steins and filling them from the open barrels as they went. They still looked sick and drunk, but they moved with the purposefulness that Felix had come to associate with dwarfs, but their appearance was as strange as any he had seen. Some wore headscarves, and their clothes were a motley assortment of rags and finery. Some went barefoot while wearing what might have been the cast off jacket of a Bretonnian admiral over ragged britches. Others were stripped to the waist, showing tanned arms and shoulders and huge white patches of belly when the rising wind blew their beards aside. Many had hooks or peg-legs or eye patches and all bore an assortment of villainous-looking scars. Most had their beards and hair plaited, the knots sealed with tar.

No, these were hardly typical dwarfs he thought. But he supposed that was only to be expected. According to Gotrek, few dwarfs went to sea, and those that did were all considered mad. Felix considered this judgement a little rich given the lunacy of the slayer's own vocation.

Caught on a steamship, with half the crew drunk and the other half sea-sick, heading into a storm, he thought – what more could possibly go wrong? He looked around again and saw that the dolphins had disappeared, vanished as though they had never been. The reason became clear. A huge head had broached the surface: a leviathan of the deep! A long sinuous neck and massive body followed. The beast was almost as large as the ship, with a mouth that could swallow a man whole. It looked at the ship with evil beady eyes as if it wanted to challenge this intruder in its domain. It blew a huge spout of water and then vanished below the surface. The last Felix saw of it was the flukes of its vast tail before it too slid beneath the surface. It seemed even the sea monsters had enough sense to avoid the coming storm. He was glad it had vanished before someone had summoned Gotrek to challenge it.

More than ever, Felix felt useless. All of the dwarfs had something to do. They rushed around turning windlasses and closing pressure spigots, slugging back ale, and slamming down hatches. Some sealed the ale barrels and rolled them below. A few banged rivets into place with hammers. Water spouted through tubes on the ships side as the pumps were tested. Felix felt like the only one on board with nothing to do. He was a useless, purposeless outsider here.

Still, he thought, he should not complain. The steamship was a blessing. Lone armed merchantmen out of Barak Varr were rare in this part of the world. When it had steamed into the harbour at Quadira, they had been only too glad to take passage on it. Gotrek had even managed to put aside his prejudice against ships in order to escape the astonishing summer heat. It had cost them the last of the gold they had taken from Sulmander's tomb, and the promise to aid in any fighting if the ship was attacked, but it had been a way out of the hot empty lands and back to civilisation, or at least somewhere near it.

It was not so hot now. The gusting winds had picked up speed and carried with it the first drops of rain. The sea was suddenly a lot rougher too. He could hear the engines strain to drive the paddles.

On impulse, Felix strode over to the bottom of the conning tower, and looked up at the captain. 'Permission to come up, sir,' he asked. He had learned early that no one set foot on that tower without either being invited or ordered there. Surprisingly, it was something even the usually rebellious slayer seemed to accept.

'Aye, Felix Jaeger, climb up and have some brew.' The captain seemed remarkably less taciturn, now that he had ten or so beers in him, Felix thought.

He pulled himself up the metal ladder that was riveted to the wall and surveyed the command deck.

'Aye, manling, I bet you've never looked on the likes of this before!' bellowed Ahabsson.

'Actually, I have,' said Felix. Ahabsson sputtered out some of his ale.

'Where?' he shouted. 'Speak up, lubber!'

Felix found himself shouting back: 'It looks remarkably similar to the command deck of the airship *Spirit of Grungni*!'

A look of astonishment passed over the captain's face. 'I knew a dwarf once who was always talking about building an airship. They said he was mad, you know!'

'Malakai Makaisson,' said Felix. 'I know him.'

'You know Makaisson? The greatest dwarf shipwright who ever lived? Although I understand his *Unsinkable* had a few teething troubles.'

'I understand it sank,' said Felix. He eyed the oncoming storm clouds warily. They filled most of the sky ahead now, and the waves looked the size of mountains. The *Storm Hammer* was already beginning to climb up the side of one long swell.

'Aye, but she was a beautiful ship,' said Ahabsson. 'Beautiful. I watched her pull out of port the day of her shakedown cruise. She never came back of course. He shaved his head afterwards, or so the wharf rats say.'

'He became a slayer,' said Felix.

'A rare pity. Malakai Makaisson's compressor engines are still the best ever designed.'

'He built his airship. I travelled on it. To the Chaos Wastes.'

Spray whipped into Felix's face. The wind had turned very cold and rain pattered off the decks, forming puddles in the indented metal. All of the dwarfs were below now,

save the watchman in the crows-nest and the captain on the tower. All of the hatches were sealed. Felix suddenly felt very lonely and exposed.

'If you were not travelling in the company of Gotrek Gurnisson, human, I would be inclined to doubt ye.'

Felix looked at the controls. 'That would be the throttle, for controlling the power to the engines,' he said, pointing to lever next to the captain's hand. 'Those gauges monitor steam pressure. The compass there points to true north, when it's not been distorted by the influence of Chaos, and you can navigate by it, and by the stars.'

'In truth, I thought these were secrets known only to dwarf mariners and engineers,' said the captain. 'How did you come by them?'

'Malakai Makaisson taught me how to fly the *Spirit of Grungni*.'

'Then he overstepped himself, laddie, but then he was a dwarf that never cared too much for the proprieties. Ye reckon ye can handle a ship then?'

'I could probably steer her if need be,' said Felix.

'Aye, as long as we are out in the deeps, maybe ye could. But I'll bet you have no knowledge of tides or currents or...'

'No need if you're flying,' said Felix.

'No, I suppose not,' said Ahabsson. The howling of the wind made his bellow almost inaudible. Huge waves had begun to break over the ship's prow. Sheets of white water ran down the decks as the ship rose into the crest. Felix felt a hint of his seasickness return.

'Best get below, laddie,' said Ahabsson. 'This is going to be a rough one.'

Felix dropped down the ladder as he had seen the dwarfs do, keeping his feet on the outside, sliding rather than climbing. His palms were hot from friction as he hit the deck. Suddenly he wished he were back above again.

The air was close and fetid. It reeked of ale, vomit and the acrid stink of metal. There was a sulphurous stench that came from the boiler rooms, along with the clangour of pistons rising and falling and paddlewheels turning. It was like being trapped inside a huge drum while a giant beat time. He had to crouch, for the ship had been built for people shorter and wider than himself. He

was suddenly abruptly aware of being on a moving tube of metal surrounded on all sides by water. The pounding of the waves on the deck above reminded him that sometimes he was well under water. A look out of a porthole showed him only blackness and rising bubbles.

He pushed forward into the mess room, and saw Gotrek Gurnisson at the bench next to the metal table. The benches had been riveted to the floor. The table itself was a sheet of iron, mounted on top of a steel pillar that rose directly from the deck. Other queasy looking dwarfs surrounded Gotrek. They drank ale dourly. The slayer looked utterly different from the sailors. He was much broader and heavier and half-a head taller than all of the other dwarfs, even without the huge crest of orange dyed hair that rose above his tattooed scalp. A patch covered his ruined eye. In one massive fist he clutched a tankard. In the other was an axe, the like of which a strong man would have struggled to wield with two hands.

'It was on a night such as this that the *Karak Varn* went down,' shouted Ugly Urli. The marine sergeant wore an expression of sour pleasure on his shrapnel pocked face. 'Aye a terrible storm that was.'

'She was washed up on the beach at Kregaerak, a huge hole in the hull. Some say she hit a rock, others that it was one of the terrors of the deep, the giant dragon shark,' said Mobi. He was short, even for a dwarf, and very, very wide.

'No,' said Tobi, one of the shortbeards. 'It was a kraken.'

Gotrek showed some interest now, despite his queasy appearance. Talk of huge monsters always got his attention. It was hardly surprising. After all, he had sworn an oath to seek his death in combat with such creatures. To tell the truth, Felix could have done without hearing these tales. It seemed that no matter what the situation, dwarfs could always find a way to make it worse by recalling great disasters from their history.

Felix hunched across the chamber, almost on all fours, and was suddenly glad of it when the ship shuddered and rocked hugely. A surge of nausea filled him, and he was convinced that something massive had struck the ship. The image of the *Storm Hammer* hurtling to the bottom like a huge

water-filled metal coffin jumped into his mind.

The ship shook again, and all of the dwarfs grabbed the table, the benches or the door handles, whatever came to hand. Felix found himself tossed right across the room. He felt briefly weightless and wondered what was going on. Had the ship been lifted from the sea by some huge monster, or simply tossed by one of the mountainous waves?

The dwarfs returned to swilling their drinks as if nothing had happened. 'And a ship crewed by dead men rose from the among the sea-weed,' said Narli, a wizened ancient with a face like a diseased prune and a long, shaggy beard that came almost to his feet.

Felix could feel the hull creaking and flexing below him, and wondered how much strain the ship could take before being broken in two? He wished he was an engineer, and knew about such things, but one look at Gotrek's face convinced him that perhaps it was better not to know. The slayer rose to his feet and padded across the deck, heading for the ladder.

'Where are you going?' Felix asked.

'To get some fresh air,' the slayer replied. Gotrek reached the stairs at the end of the cabin and was greeted by a rush of water when he thrust open the door. It was almost as if someone had thrown a filled bucket in the dwarf's face. Undaunted, Gotrek strode out onto the soaking deck. Just before the other dwarfs shut the door, Felix could see him raise both arms above his head and bellow defiance at the lightning scored sky. He seemed to be daring the gods of the sea to take him.

The door closed. The last Felix saw of the slayer was him reeling across the deck, bellowing madly at the uncaring sky. Then the ship surged forward into another huge wave. Felix turned and looked at the drunken dwarfs. They avoided his gaze, their faces filled with superstitious dread, as they muttered to themselves in Dwarfish.



2 Wild Orcish Rievers

FELIX PULLED himself wearily onto the deck. The sky was blue and clear. The gulls had returned overhead. A huge albatross rode the air above their stern, ignoring the pot shots the dwarfs took at it with the gymbal mounted stern cannon. The sea was calm and flat as a mirror.

Gotrek stood at the prow, looking ahead, still and stolid as a statue. A glance showed Felix that Captain Ahabsson was asleep in a metal chair on the conning tower while one of the other dwarfs had taken the wheel. The ship looked the way Felix felt. Many plates on the deck were bent out of shape. He could tell just by the sound of the wheels and engines that there was some damage. The amount of water the side pumps were spewing spoke of a hull that had sprung leaks. The sound of hammering from below told him that the dwarfs were busy about their repairs.

He touched his bruises. They were still tender. He had been tossed around all night by the motion of the ship as it crashed through the storm. He had dozed fitfully, plagued by nightmares and he had woken often to the sound of screaming metal and tortured engines as the *Storm Hammer* clove a path through the mountainous seas. Sometimes he had been sick. At other times he was so certain that he was going to die by being swallowed by the waves that he had considered throwing himself overboard just to get it over with.

In the bright calm light of the quiet morning such thoughts seemed like mad fantasies, but he knew they had passed through his mind the previous night. He strode over to Gotrek.

'Where are we?'

'Damned if I know, manling,' the slayer replied. 'Are those islands?'

Felix shaded his eyes with one hand. It certainly looked as if there were peaks on the horizon, and perhaps something else, something moving. 'Looks like another ship,' he said.

'I'll take your word for it. Your eyes are better than mine.'

Felix clambered up to the crow's-nest on the mainmast. It had been abandoned sometime during the storm. He hoped the watcher had made it below and had not

been carried off by the sea. He unlimbered the huge spyglass from its protective case and trained it on the distant spot, turning the eyepiece and tracking wheels to bring it into focus as he had been taught. The telescope was a powerful one, and it seemed like his vision had been sent flashing towards the horizon. When it reached its target, he wished it had not. Another ship was indeed out there, and it was like no vessel Felix had ever seen before.

It looked like a cross between a raft and a Bretonnian galleon, propelled by a combination of oars, paddle-wheels and sails. It had a makeshift look combined with a brutal functionality that told Felix who its builders were even before he caught sight of his first green skin. He banged the alarm bell and shouted: 'Beware! Orcs!'

If he had claimed that the ship was sinking he could not have received a swifter response. Suddenly the decks seethed with dwarfs, all straining to see in the direction of the oncoming ship. Ahabsson had risen from his chair and trained his spyglass on the horizon. Felix returned to gazing into his.

He guessed that the orc ship was twice the size of the *Storm Hammer*, and it had perhaps four or five times the crew. A number of massive orcs filled the vessel's huge stern and forecastles. Goblin sailors swarmed over the sails and rigging. Strange crude rune signs had been painted on the sails. The skull of some large beast and its thighbones crossed beneath it had been nailed to the largest mast. A large catapult was mounted on some sort of rotating platform at the fore. Another smaller one dominated the stern.

The dwarfs' response was not what he had expected. Ahabsson leaned forward and pulled a lever before returning to the wheel. The speed of the *Storm Hammer* picked up as it swerved towards the orc craft. What were these maniacs up to, Felix wondered? He had expected flight before a craft so obviously superior. After all, Gotrek was the only slayer on board, and they were carrying a cargo of precious spices. Felix shouted into the speaking tube: 'Captain. We are heading toward the orcs!'

Even distorted by the speaking tube, Ahabsson's cackle was recognisable. 'Don't fret laddie. We'll have her soon enough for ye. Keep your eyes peeled and let me know of any surprises.'

'You intend to sink her?' Felix asked incredulously.

'No! Board her, and take her treasure. Thon's an orc freebooter. She's bound to have loot in her hold.'

'I didn't know you were a pirate captain,' said Felix, instantly regretting the words.

'Privateer, laddie, and don't you forget it. We've letters of marque from the Shipwrights' Council at Barak Varr.'

'Well, that's a relief,' muttered Felix. Steam hissed below, as the ironclad's turret began to bring itself to bear on the orc hulk. There was a strange grinding sound as it moved, and one of the shortbeards moved to lubricate the base with oil. Felix wondered how much damage the ship had really sustained during the storm.

Most of the dwarfs had gone back below to their battle stations. The marines prepared their crossbows or stood by the large gymbal mounted handcannons. Gotrek watched from the prow. Even from this height, Felix could see the tension in him.

He gave his attention back to the freebooter. As they closed more details became clear, and the more he saw, the less he liked their situation. Even though the *Storm Hammer* was built of metal, and their foe of wood, they seemed grossly outmatched to him. The orc craft was much larger and the crew far more numerous. Worse still there seemed to be some sort of shaman on the forecastle of the ship, dancing around the catapult and shouting spells.

Teams of goblins, naked save for loincloths, glistened with sweat as they turned the winches that drew the catapult's arm into the firing position, or provided the motive power to rotate its mounting platform. Lordly orcs stood by, bellowing instructions. Obviously it was too much for the warriors to sully their claws with manual work. The orcs were huge creatures' twice as tall and many times the weight of the lean stringy goblins. Most were wearing britches and headscarves tied around their bald pates. Many were armed with cutlasses, a few carried bows. All were festooned lavishly with jewellery.

Felix shifted his point of view to the sterncastle, where the orc captain stood surrounded by his cronies. He was a

massive creature, his head adorned with a Bretonnian admiral's tricorn hat. His tusks gleamed gold in the sunlight and he bore a cutlass in each hand.

Felix shouted the description into the speaking tube.

'Better and better,' replied Ahabsson. 'Uragh Goldtusk is the most feared pirate on the Gulf. The sultans have posted a reward of its own weight in gems for his head.'

The name made Felix shiver. In the bazaars and hostelries of Kadiria, the boldest sailors muttered Goldtusk's name with fear. The tales of his ferocity and cruelty were dark legends within themselves! When the orc captain moved, Felix's eyes came to rest on a figure his bulk had previously hidden.

She was a human woman, tall, lithe and well formed, and very beautiful despite being garbed in what looked like the garments of a Bretonnian sailor. Her hair, which fell to her shoulders, was raven black and curly. Her hands were bound in chains, but she held her head high and showed no fear. Felix was too dumbstruck to inform the captain of what he saw.

The sea around the *Storm Hammer* churned white as she picked up speed. Clouds of sparks and back smoke emerged from her funnels. The gulls squawked and shrieked. The ship heeled and turned to take a better line towards its foe.

Felix saw the distant catapult arm swing forward. A blazing fireball rose from it and arced towards the *Storm Hammer*. The huge sphere left a fiery comet trail behind it that glowed unnaturally, with just the faintest hint of green. It flew further and faster than any natural stone could have and landed in the water just in front of the *Storm Hammer's* prow, sending up an enormous column of steam and boiling water, before sinking into the depths. When he looked down, Felix could see it still glowing as it plunged towards the sea bottom.

The islands were closer now, a smudge of black peaks smeared on the horizon, one much larger and more prominent than the others. Felix knew that they were much too far away to swim to it, even if sharks didn't get them. Ahabsson had set them on a course that could easily lead to their deaths, for Felix doubted the orcs would let them escape in the ship's boats. The best they could hope for would be capture, in which

case they would be enslaved or eaten. His glance rested for a moment on Gotrek. The slayer brandished his axe and bellowed challenges at the enemy. There was one who would suffer neither. Only death or victory lay ahead for him.

The goblins worked the winches again, and once more the catapult arm bent back into position. The shaman continued his relentless dance, and Felix could see a faint nimbus of greenish-light playing around his head. It was still too far for a crossbow shot. He was sure that the greenskin sorcerer would work more deviltry before this day was through.

The *Storm Hammer* continued to cleave through the waves, moving inexorably closer to the orc ship. The barrel of the cannon in the turret had elevated now. There was an enormous boom, and a cloud of sparks and smoke billowed out, momentarily obscuring his view of the enemy ship. Felix heard the whistle of the cannonball, and seconds later saw it impact on the side of the orc hulk, smashing through the timber and leaving a gaping hole.

Ahabsson barked more instructions to the gunners in dwarfish, and the turret continued to swivel as the *Storm Hammer* maintained its course. Felix began to see method in the captain's madness. The orc ship was tacking towards them, but on their present course the *Storm Hammer* would emerge upwind and behind the freebooter. Hopefully they could smash its paddles and destroy its catapult and pick off the crew at will.

Felix heard the grinding of gears around the left wheel, and hoped that whatever damage the dwarf ship had taken in the storm would not fatally weaken her now.

The catapult opened fire once more. The shaman danced and capered, and as he did so, the huge fireball altered its course in mid-flight, veering towards the *Storm Hammer*. Felix watched gape mouthed. He had seen a great deal of sorcery in his life but this was something new. If Ahabsson was surprised, he gave no sign. He merely swivelled his head to track the fireball as it came towards them. Felix felt his mouth go dry as the blazing sphere seemed almost to creep closer. It occurred to him that the fireball could actually hit him, and that he may die here. Indeed, it would not need to hit him. It

could simply strike the steel mast to which the crow's-nest was attached and send him crashing into the sea. He had never felt more acutely vulnerable in his entire life. Looking at the blazing sphere, he could see that it had a core of molten stone surrounded by a nimbus of magical fire.

As the fireball came near the end of its downward arc, Ahabsson swung the wheel and pulled violently on one of the levers beside him. There was a grinding of gears as one of the great paddle wheels went into reverse. The *Storm Hammer* yawed wildly, and took a new course. The fireball struck the ship only a glancing blow, but it was enough. There was a blinding flash and a searing wave of heat swept over the steamship. She shuddered with the impact. Felix heard a hail of shrapnel patter on the metal hull. A few of the dwarfs shouted or screeched in pain. Felix ducked as small blazing stones pinged off the metal cupola around him. A moment later he heard a couple of secondary bangs.

When he looked up he could see part of the *Storm Hammer's* hull was scorched black, some metal plates appeared to have buckled and two of the rail-mounted handcannons had exploded in the heat of the impact. Several dwarfs lay in crumpled heaps on the deck. The ship's surgeon and his assistants raced towards them. Another fear smote Felix. There was no sorcerer present to magically heal his wounds. Looking at the hacksaw the surgeon carried, it became obvious why so many of the dwarfs had peg-legs and hooks instead of hands. Shattered limbs were hacked off. Stumps were plunged into hot tar. It was a testimony to the ruggedness of the dwarfn sailors that none of them screamed, although even from here, Felix could see their faces were masks of sweating agony.

That might happen to him, he thought. He might lose a limb or an eye. The realisation made his stomach churn. Looking down, he could see that the marines had broken out the casks of ale again, and something stronger. Urli and Mobi were distributing tots of some foul black liquid from a leather flask, and the dwarfen marines consumed it with relish before washing it down with more ale.

Only Gotrek stood apart, his whole attention focused on the orcish ship, like a hound straining at the leash. He radiated

frustration, and looked as if he was considering throwing himself over the side and swimming towards the freebooter. Felix thought he understood. This was a battle where the slayer had no control over his destiny. He could not close with his foe until Ahabsson decided to. And who could tell when that would be?

The cannon spoke again, and either by luck or design, struck the forecastle of the oncoming hulk. The ensuing explosion smashed the catapult to splinters. When the smoke cleared, fire raged and the shaman was nowhere to be seen. Relief filled Felix. With the sorcerer out of action there was a chance they would survive this.

A cheer went up from the marines and they bellowed catcalls and challenges at their foe. Goblins scurried across the ship, encouraged by cuffs and kicks from the orcs, hastily throwing bucket after bucket of water onto the blazing weapon. One catapult down, one to go, Felix thought.

Ahabsson held his line, and the *Storm Hammer* sped past the stern of the hulk so close that Felix could see the faces of the orcs without needing to use the spyglass. The dwarf ship began to come round in a great figure of eight turn that would position them directly to the rear of the orcs, with the turret in direct line to fire. As they did so, Felix could see that the second, smaller, catapult on the sterncastle was being wheeled to bear on them. At least, he told himself, there was no shaman present now to guide its stones with spells, only the bellowing Goldtusk and his lieutenants and their prisoner.

Felix considered telling Ahabsson about the girl, but realised that by now the captain could see her for himself. It was unlikely he was going to change his plan simply because there was one human woman present either. His duty was to his own ship and people, and his gold lust was focused on his prize.

The *Storm Hammer* had almost completed her turn now and was in a position right behind Goldtusk's vessel. So swiftly had they executed the manoeuvre that their own white wake was visible before them, crossing that left by the orc craft. Goldtusk raised one huge arm then lowered it: the second catapult spoke. A huge boulder spun through the air and impacted on the turret of the steamer. The whole ship shuddered. The turret rang like a bell. At first Felix

thought there was no damage, save for a massive dent in the armoured plate, but then he noticed that the turret had stopped tracking and smoke was emerging from below. It seemed that the mechanism had been damaged, and perhaps the gun crew stunned. The shortbeard who had been oiling the machine lay in a pool of blood half covered by a boulder as big as a man's body. Nothing the chirurgeon could do there, Felix thought.

Ahabsson bellowed something into another of the speaking tubes. He appeared to be demanding to know why the gunners were asleep on the job. His shouts got no response. The dwarfen crossbows opened up now, a hail of somewhat inaccurate fire raking the orcish sterncastle. Felix saw Goldtusk push the woman away behind him. A couple of orcs and goblins went down, but the captain himself was unharmed.

As Felix watched, more and more greenskins flooded onto the sterncastle, bellowing and grunting, seemingly oblivious of the black smoke rising up behind them. They appeared more concerned with getting into the fight than with the fact that their own craft might soon become a floating funeral pyre.

What was Ahabsson going to do, Felix wondered? Now that the *Storm Hammer's* main offensive weapon was out of action, his plan had been negated. The best Felix could think of was that they should pull back out of range and wait for the fire to spread through the enemy vessel. Of course that would mean foregoing the treasure and leaving the woman to her doom, but it would certainly spare their own lives. Even if the orcs succeeded in getting the blaze under control, it would take some of their lives, and damage their ship still further.

The captain seemed to have come to the same conclusion, for the great paddlewheels ground into reverse, allowing them to hold their position. Evidently Ahabsson was still hoping that his gun crew could eventually fire their weapon, for he held the prow in line with the hulk. Even if the turret could not track, they could still shoot at the enemy.

Arrows began to descend on the decks of the dwarfen ship, but the crew merely ducked behind the turret and the guardrails and the shafts merely fell onto the deck. Felix was glad none of the greenskins had

thought to take a shot at him, but realised it was only a matter of time. He debated whether to risk climbing down or waiting for the smoke from the fire to cover him. The decision was taken from his hands when disaster struck.

A grinding crunching sound came from below, and the wheels ceased their spinning. A smell of burning rose from beneath him. It seemed that the storm damage had been worse than Felix thought, or perhaps it had been the impact of the sorcerous fireball, or some combination of them both, but now the *Storm Hammer* was slowing. Soon she would be wallowing dead in the water.

Worse still, the orcs had reefed their sails and begun to slow themselves. They had reversed their own paddle wheels. Even as Felix watched, the hulk slowed to a stop and then backed up towards the dwarfen ship. The orc's paddles were not nearly so swift and efficient as the *Storm Hammer's*, but they were doing the job.

From below Felix could hear the sound of hammering as dwarfen engineers worked to get the ship moving again, but even he could see that there was no chance of it happening before they were attacked. Arrows sleeted down on the deck now, pinning down the marines. Even Gotrek had taken cover, standing ready behind the huge moulded figurehead at the prow. They had gone from predator to prey in the space of a heartbeat.

The hulk came ever closer, and as it did so, it loomed ever larger. To Felix's fevered imagination it took on the massiveness of a mountain, looming over the steamer like one of the icebergs of the frozen northern seas. The top of the sterncastle was almost level with Felix's crows-nest. He ducked down so that only his eyes were above the level of the cupola.

The orcs bellowed in triumph, crowding the railings. They were close enough for Felix to see that the guardrails had been salvaged or stolen from a Bretonnian ship. Goblins and orcs filled the rigging, clinging to the lines, obviously preparing themselves to swing down onto the *Storm Hammer*.

As they did so, Felix noticed that the barrel of the turret had started to elevate and that Ahabsson was bellowing something about grapeshot. If the orcs noticed, most of them gave no indication of caring. Only Goldtusk

shouted something to his closest followers and herded them back from the rails.

A moment later smoke billowed from the turret once more and there was a sound like thunder. Grapeshot ripped across the front of the sterncastle and into sails, tearing canvas, peppering the wood with holes, ripping through the flesh of orc and goblin alike. Their shouts of triumph momentarily turned to screams. Goblins lost their foothold in the rigging and dropped into the sea. Sleek black-finned shapes told Felix that the sharks were waiting to feast.

As the orcish arrow fire slackened off, the dwarf marines emerged from cover. Muskets, crossbows and handcannons raked the enemy decks. More greenskins fell. For a moment, it looked like panic would spread among the orcs, but Goldtusk re-emerged. He had been saved by stepping back out of the line of the upward angled cannon shot. Now he shrieked instructions at his followers, cuffed and booted them into some semblance of order.

At that moment the *Storm Hammer's* hull rang like a bell as the two ships careered into each other. The first wave of orcs and goblins swung down from the rigging on their lines. Orcs hastily tossed boarding nets over the side, and tried to snag the *Storm Hammer* with grapnels.

Doubtless, had not the grapeshot depleted their numbers, Goldtusk's crew would have overwhelmed the dwarfen marines in the initial assault. As it was, a few of the dwarfs let of a ragged volley of musketry and crossbow fire, before snatching up their sea-axes, hammers and cutlasses to make ready to repel boarders.



3 The Prisoner

ORC AND DWARF clashed. Hammer splintered bone. Cutlass clove through dwarfen flesh. Blood, green and red mingled on the metal decks. Felix felt useless, high above the fight. He snatched out his sword and considered his options. He could try to absail down the

mast using the line, but that would be difficult with a weapon in one hand. He could climb down slowly on the handholds but that would leave him vulnerable to arrow fire. Or he could stay where he was and do nothing.

More and more orcs and goblins swarmed down the boarding nets. While they were engaged in a melee there was little the dwarfs could do to prevent them. Ahabsson had produced a set of pistols and blasted away at the greenskins, picking up another with his good hand as soon as he had discharged the first.

'Get off my ship!' he bellowed. Then Gotrek emerged from the shadow of the prow. He raced among the orcs chopping left and right with the axe. Nothing could stop him. He reaped lives like a peasant scything corn, clove through the greenskin ranks like a runaway chariot, scattered his foes like a whirlwind scatters leaves. It was as if some ancient dwarfen god of war had emerged onto the blood-slick decks and strove to avenge his people on their ancient enemies. Goblins threw themselves over the guardrails into the shark-infested waters to escape him. Orcs held their ground and died. The dwarfen marines, moments before in disarray, suddenly took heart. Their line stiffened, they threw themselves forward in Gotrek's wake, and tore into the ever-increasing number of orcs that still dropped onto their decks from the boarding nets.

Felix was suddenly distracted as some freak of wind or wave rolled the ship. The mast tipped downwards towards the sterncastle of the orc vessel. Through the clouds of smoke, Felix caught a glimpse of the woman struggling in the grasp of her brutal green skinned captors and, acting on instinct, grabbed a line and flung himself out into space.

Seconds later his boots clattered down on the deck of the orc sterncastle. He raced through the smoke across the wooden deck towards where he had last seen the woman. She stood at bay, her back to a guard-rail, trying to drive back an orc with bunched chains wrapped around her wrists.

Felix rammed his sword into the orcs back. It passed right through its stomach and out of the other side. When he withdrew it the orc tumbled forward, only to have its skull crushed by the woman's flailing chains. Felix

stood face to face with her. Even blood-spattered and smoke-smudged she was lovely. She smiled briefly, then gave him a haughty look, and said, 'What are you waiting for? Free me!'

Her voice was low and husky, the accent Tilean. Felix did not like her tone, but now was not the time or place to tell her this.

'Where are the keys?'

'Goldtusk has them!'

Felix put his foot on the loop of chain, inserted the blade of his sword into the links and twisted. As he did so, he noticed that there were strange runes on the cuffs, and at first the metal seemed to tingle when he touched it. The tip of his sword bored into the deck and the blade flexed. A normal sword would have broken under the strain, but Felix was confident that the magical blade he had found under Karag Eight Peaks would endure. The link widened and Felix stooped until the connecting loop fell out. 'What's your name?' Felix asked as he inspected the chain on her arms. Yes, definitely some sort of rune work there. Perhaps the orcs had a system for designating whose property their captive was.

'Katja Murillo. And yours?'

'Felix Jaeger.'

'Well, Felix Jaeger, pleased as I am to make your acquaintance, I would appreciate it if you could hurry up and remove these chains from my arms.'

'I'm working on it.' He saw the woman's eyes widen as she glanced over his shoulder, and he turned to see what the fuss was about.

The smoke clouds had parted momentarily and Captain Goldtusk stood revealed. He looked surprised to see a human on his command deck. Felix seized the opportunity and aimed a two handed stroke at his head. The orc responded with cat-like quickness. One of the cutlasses rose to block Felix's blow, while the other lashed out to strike.

Felix leapt backwards, bringing his blade up into the guard position. Sparks flashed as the weapons clashed. The brutal strength of the orc's blow almost knocked the sword from Felix's hand. He was aware that the orc was a head taller than he was, and much heavier. Huge muscles rippled smoothly beneath the taut green skin as Goldtusk advanced, driving Felix backwards.

For long moments it was all he could do to defend himself. He had never faced a swordsman quite as deadly as the pirate captain. He seemed equally adept at using his blade with either hand, and his speed and power were devastating. Felix considered himself a better than able swordsman, and a stronger than average man, but it was instantly obvious to him that he was grossly outmatched.

He glanced around, looking for a way out, but saw none. The woman had vanished into the smoke, and all that was visible was the looming figure of the orcish captain. Their blades crossed again, and a slash from the orc's left hand blade left a bloody weal across the front of Felix's tunic. If he had been a heartbeat slower Felix knew the blow would have smashed through his ribs and cut through vital organs.

The crackling heat of the blaze was like an inferno. Sweat soaked his shirt now, and the acrid reek of smoke and gunpowder filled his nostrils. The screams of the dying rose from the deck of the *Storm Hammer* behind him. He could hear Gotrek's bellowed war-cry and the shouts of the dwarf privateers mingled with the grunts and shrieks of the orcs. Under the circumstances there was no way of telling how the battle was going, but it was obvious he could expect no help from that direction. It looked like Gotrek would have to find someone else to write his death saga. Felix was going to be too dead to do it.

At that moment, he heard the hiss of chains whipping through the air, and the heavy links connected with the orc's head, knocking him off balance. Katja Murillo was there, using the severed lengths of chain as a weapon. Goldtusk twisted to see the source of the new threat, and Felix lashed out with his weapon. Even half stunned, the orc's astonishing quickness saved him. He half-sprang, half-reeled to one side, taking only a long cut across the forehead. He glared hatred at Felix for an instant before vanishing into the smoke.

'We'd best get off this ship,' said Katja. 'It's going to go down. There's no way that fire is going to be brought under control now.'

'Wonderful,' said Felix. 'How do you suggest we do that?'

The woman had already gone, vanishing off in the direction of the screams. Felix followed and found himself looking down from the sterncastle of the hulk onto a scene of utter carnage. Orc and goblin bodies were piled high on the decks of the *Storm Hammer*. Gotrek stood atop the heap, bellowing challenges and ranting insanely in dwarfish. Orcs still responded to his shouts, clambering over the corpses of their dead comrades to get to the slayer while goblins clambered back up the boarding nets. Felix readied his sword to meet them. At the stern of the *Storm Hammer* the few surviving marines had rallied around Ahabsson and were more than holding their own.

Suddenly the dwarf ship's wheels started to churn the sea, and the *Storm Hammer* began to shudder. Perhaps some of the engineers had carried on making repairs below while the battle raged. Perhaps the obstruction had cleared itself. Felix could only guess. What he was absolutely certain of was that if he did not get back onto the steamship now, he would be swimming back to her through shark infested waters. He looked around to see if could find Katja and noticed that the woman had already absailed halfway down the side of the hulk. She had found a rope and looped it around her waist and was using it to help her. Felix did not have time for that. Instead he threw himself over the barrier, and scampered down the net, lashing out with his boots at any goblins that got in his way. As if by silent agreement, they allowed him unobstructed passage, and he dropped the last span to the steel deck. Katja was already there.

It was obvious that the *Storm Hammer's* paddles were not working perfectly, that one was churning the water quicker than the other, for the steamer had begun a slow rotation as she backed away from the hulk. A glance told him that the wooden wheels at the back of the orc ship had been broken by the impact.

The orcs seemed to realise at last what was happening. Some of them threw themselves over the side into the sea to return to their blazing ship. Others made the mistake of taking their eyes off the slayer for a fatal instant, and never looked upon anything again in this life. The dwarfs made a final heroic effort and drove the last of the boarders into the sea. Within a few seconds

not a single greenskin was left alive on the decks of the *Storm Hammer*.

Bellowing instructions, Ahabsson made his way back to his command deck and began to tug levers and batter gauges with his fist. The crippled steamship and the blazing hulk drifted apart. Felix could see the fire had spread from stem to sterncastle across the huge ship, the sails were alight, and the rigging ablaze. Frantic efforts by the orcs and goblins to stem the blaze went to no avail.

As the morning wore on, the two ships continued to drift apart. Eventually the surviving greenskins took to the boats, and rowed off towards the islands. Shortly thereafter, the blazing hulk slid beneath the surface and was seen no more.

Mobi strode up to Felix's side. 'There goes Goldtusk's treasure,' he said regretfully. 'There goes our chance to be rich.'

'You're wrong,' said Katja from behind him. Felix suspected that it would have been better for his health and his peace of mind if she had kept her mouth shut.

'What do you mean?' asked Mobi. 'And who are you anyway?'

'I'd better tell that to your captain,' said Katja.

'Aye,' said Mobi. 'No doubt he'll be wanting a word anyway!'

'First find a hammer and strike these chains from my hands,' said the woman haughtily.

'I take orders from Captain Ahabsson, not from you, woman,' said Mobi, and led her away.



4 The Island of Fear

WHO ARE YOU and what are you doing on my ship?' asked Ahabsson. He nursed an ale in his now bandaged hand. Felix and Gotrek watched interestedly as the woman prepared to reply. Faint splashes told Felix of orcish bodies being unceremoniously tossed over the side. Felix noticed that some of the goblins had hugely distended earlobes from

which copper chains dangled. Others had copper pins struck through their noses. Most all of them were covered in barbaric scar tattoos.

'I am Captain Katja Murillo, out of Tobaro in Tilea.'

'Captain of what?'

'The *Golden Gull*.'

'Women captains? What will the manlings think of next?' grumbled Ahabsson. 'How came you to be Goldtusk's prisoner?'

'I was cruising these waters in search of Redhand's treasure when Goldtusk took my ship. He fired some of my crew from the catapults and ate the rest.'

There was a near imperceptible change in the atmosphere, the dwarfs suddenly glanced around furtively and seemed to radiate attentiveness. They always did when treasure was mentioned. Urli licked his lips.

'Why here?'

'The treasure is to be found on those islands,' she said.

'And how do you know this? Redhand vanished a decade ago, and neither man nor dwarf knows where he went or what happened to his loot.'

'He was my father,' she said. Ahabsson shrugged.

'That would make a difference, I suppose.'

'He left a map. It was etched onto the lid of a jewellery box he gave my mama before his last voyage. The pattern was concealed within a standard Arabian design. It was only when I got my master's ticket that I realised what it was myself.'

'And where is this box now?'

'At the bottom of the sea. It most likely went down with Goldtusk's ship.'

'Then the treasure is gone, isn't it?'

'No. I memorised the pattern. I can find it.'

'Can you now, girl? You sure?'

'Aye.'

'And I suppose you will split it with us if we take you to the islands and bring it back.'

'Aye. Three shares to one. If you'll give me your word on the deal.'

'That would be three shares in my favour would it?' said Ahabsson.

'No. In mine.'

'I have a ship to fuel and a crew that needs paying.'

'Three quarters of nothing is nothing. And you'll have to harbour in the islands anyway for repairs judging by the looks of your ship here.'

'We could just set you down on the island and leave you there.'

'You would not do that to another mariner, captain.'

'Would I not?'

The woman just looked at him. Ahabsson shrugged and said, 'I suppose you're right. One for one and my word on it.'

'A deal.'

They both spat on their hands and shook. Felix looked at Gotrek. The slayer was bandaged in half a dozen places. He looked a terrible sight but Felix knew he would heal with near supernatural speed. He always did. Gotrek's face was stone hard and enigmatic. For once he did not look all that excited by the prospect of gold. The surgeon had already slathered healing salve over Felix's own wounds. It had burned at first but now the pain was all but gone.

'Is that treasure the reason why the orc spared you when he killed your crew?'

'Aye,' she said. 'I told him about it. It was that or be eaten like my men.'

'That's two ships that have gone down looking for this treasure then,' said Gotrek. 'Let's hope we're not the third.'

'Aye,' said Ahabsson. 'Now we best begin repairing the ship.'



THE ENGINEERS HAD got the wheels working properly once more, albeit very slowly. Felix watched the island come closer. He could see a mighty peak in the centre, and as they approached, huge cliffs of most unusual aspect. At their highest they towered to perhaps a hundred times the height of a man. The stone was predominantly reddish brown and layered in many different shades. Here and there streamers of rock ran down through the layers, as if the stone had run like wax and then solidified. Gulls hurled themselves outwards from the cliffs but Felix could see no way to climb up from where they were.

Indeed, the base of the cliffs appeared to have been eroded inwards by the foaming breakers surging against its side. It would be an impossible climb, Felix realised.

'Lava made those cliffs,' said Gotrek. 'That mountain is a volcano.'

Felix did not ask how he knew. Dwarfs were incredibly knowledgeable in the ways of stone and earth.

'Let's hope it does not erupt while we are here,' said Felix, eying the peak warily.

'Aye, let us hope so.'

'What is twisting your face? You do not seem as happy as a dwarf with a prospect of treasure before him should be.'

'There is something about this place I do not like, manling. I do not like it at all.'

Felix considered this and shivered despite the late afternoon heat. Anything that made Gotrek Gurnisson uneasy was something that should give any sane man nightmares.

Ahabsson and Katja stood on the conning tower. The engineers had struck off her chains, and found her a cutlass. She looked almost as piratical as Goldtusk. Looking at her, it was easy to believe she was Redhand's daughter.

The captain relayed her instructions into his speaking tube. The *Storm Hammer* limped along at a fraction of her normal speed. Ahead of them a natural harbour loomed, a ribbon of black sand beach fringed by palm trees. Cliffs flanked the bay on either side, and jungle rose on the hills behind it. There was no sign of human habitation Felix could see.

The *Storm Hammer* shuddered to a halt. In the hours it had taken to find the harbour, Felix got some idea of the casualties they had suffered. Every one of the crew had been wounded. Some had been scratches, others had resulted in amputations. Some had been scalded badly by steam gushing from broken pipes. Half of them had died. Normally they would have been sewn into their shrouds and tossed overboard but given the presence of land so close, Ahabsson had decided to bury them there. Given the choice any dwarf would prefer to be buried on earth or stone, and the captain was willing to grant that if he could.

The ship herself had fared about as well as her crew. She was still capable of movement, but slowly and painfully. She had suffered a great deal of damage, and according to

Malgrim, the chief engineer, it would take a lot of work to make her seaworthy again. There was no way she could survive another storm like the one the night before, let alone a sea-battle if it came to it. For all that the crew seemed happy enough to go about their business, even the wounded helping as much as they could. It was amazing how the prospect of finding hidden gold perked up a dwarf.

'I will not be sorry to feel land under my feet again, manling,' said Gotrek. Felix agreed, although there was something about the riotous life of the jungle that made him uneasy as well. He felt as if anything could be lurking in there, watching them with malignant eyes.

'What do you know about these islands?' Felix asked.

'Nothing, manling, I am not a sailor.'

'They might be part of the Megalean Chain,' piped up Mobi. 'It could extend this far south. Or it might be some place no mariner has heard of. We were driven pretty far off course by the storm.'

'One woman at least had heard of them,' said Felix, nodding significantly in the direction of Katja. 'And one man: her father.'

'It's possible,' said Old Narli, scratching his wizened face with an equally wizened hand. 'Redhand was the terror of these seas for twenty years, long afore Goldtusk and his orc freebooters appeared. At one time, Redhand had a fleet. They sailed everywhere they pleased. Even stormed the walls of Magritta. Although that was the end of them. The King of Estalia took exception, or so they say, and sent out all of his admirals. The pirate fleet was smashed at Bounty Bay. They say Redhand escaped with his treasure, and was never heard of again. Many a strange tale is told of Redhand. They say he was married to a sea-witch, who ruled him with a hand of iron, and wove wind and wave to her bidding. An evil pair they were. Drank blood and offered up the souls of their captives to her dark gods. I would not be surprised if this treasure was cursed. Still gold's gold for all that.'

'I wonder what happened to him,' said Felix.

'I think you might find out, manling.'

'What do you mean?'

'If you were a pirate with a cache of buried gold, would you not come back to collect it?'

'I suppose so. And if he did not simply desert his family and take up refuge somewhere else, then he might still be here.'

'Or his corpse. Assuming he's not in Far Cathay, laughing at us and all the other fools trying to find his treasure. And that's assuming the chit of a girl's story is really true.'

'Oh, it's true,' said Katja. Felix had not heard her approach, but he had to assume that Gotrek had. The slayer's ears were far keener than his own. Either he did not care whether he offended the girl, or he wanted her to hear for reasons of his own. 'And truthfully I do not know whether I hope to find it or not. If my father took it and is living somewhere right now, then may the Gods watch over him. If he died here, I hope to find that out. And if the treasure is here, I hope to claim my legacy.'

She smiled at Gotrek and then at Felix. 'A party is going ashore to bury the dead and look for water. Would you care to accompany us? We can take a look around and see if we can find the trail.'

'I will,' said Felix quickly.

'I would like to feel the earth beneath my feet once more,' said Gotrek. Felix was glad that the slayer would accompany them. The more he saw of the jungle, the more his unease grew.

'I wonder if Goldtusk made it to land yet?' he said. No one answered.

It felt strange to be back on solid ground. Even with sand crunching beneath his feet, Felix still swayed slightly, as if compensating for the subtle movements of a deck beneath him. It made him feel off-balance and he realised how used he had become to the ship's rocking movement, even in the few days they had been aboard.

The dwarfs were already returning to the ship to bring ashore more of the dead for burial. A few small shrouded corpses already lay in the sand. It was strange to think that they would lay for eternity so many hundreds of leagues from home. A deep feeling of melancholy settled on Felix as he realised that the same fate would probably befall him one day.

Gotrek seemed to read his thoughts. 'At least they will be within sight of a mountain, albeit one with fire in its heart.'

Almost as if the earth had heard him, the ground shivered. The shrouds flapped in response to more than the wind. Felix could feel the vibration through the soles of his boots. The sand shook like a frightened beast.

'What was that?' he muttered.

'An earthquake,' said Gotrek. 'A mild one. The spirit of this mountain grows restless in its sleep, it seems.'

'Let's hope it does not wake up while we are here,' said Felix.

'This island is a place where the earth was restless, and the mountains belch fire and smoke,' said Katja. Noticing Felix stare she said, 'I can remember my father speaking of it from when I was a little girl.'

'Did he speak of anything else?' asked the slayer.

'Aye, he spoke of ruins and a fallen city of some ancient people. I think we will see them on our trek inland.'

'Oh good,' said Felix, thinking of all the other tumbled down and monster-haunted places he had barely escaped with his life from during his long association with the slayer. His thoughts went from Karag Eight Peaks in the World's Edge Mountains to the Temple of the Old Ones in Albion. None of them were places he would care to revisit. 'More ruins.'

They found a stream. The water appeared pure and fresh. Light dappled the grass beneath them as if filtered through the leaves. Brightly coloured parrots squawked in the branches above them. There were the tracks of deer of some sort, and large predators. The air was warm and balmy and only slightly humid. Despite himself Felix was starting to relax a little. There were food and water here so they were not about to die of thirst.

They trekked uphill, following the path of the stream. After days on a ship, Felix found it hard going. Katja went up the path like a gazelle, seemingly glad to have the free use of her limbs once more. Of course, to Gotrek, a dwarf, the steepest of slopes were no more of an impediment than a flat plain. He was not even slightly out of breath by the time they reached the top and found the first ruin. It looked like a small watchtower, built on a lookout point. Stone had been piled on stone crudely, but strongly. It looked like nothing Felix had seen before in his travels.

'Human work,' said Gotrek, after considering it for a moment. 'Very shoddy. Destroyed by orcs, judging by those bones.'

'But long ago?' said Felix, wanting reassurance, although the facts were plain to see. Birds nested amid the tumbled stonework, white guano splattering the rocks. There was no sign of greenskin presence here. Briefly Felix considered helping himself to some of the eggs but decided against it. Perhaps the time would come for that later, before they left. He was not even sure how edible gull eggs were, although he was ready to try anything in a pinch. 'There are no orcs here now.'

'Many orc tribes are nomadic. They might have moved inland in search of better hunting, or because their gods sent them some sign, or because their chief felt like feeding on the flesh of his kin on the other side of the island. You can never tell with orcs.'

Felix had known the slayer long enough to begin to follow the track of his thoughts. 'You think Goldtusk and his merry crew might have come from around here?'

'Maybe. Perhaps he recruits from among these islands. Or has a stronghold here.'

'Goldtusk recruits from this island, I am sure of it. These waters were familiar to him. My father said there were orcs on the island. They often attacked his men.'

'You picked a fine time to tell us about this, Katja,' said Felix.

'No dwarf would have let that affect their decision,' said the woman.

Gotrek grunted agreement but Felix was aggrieved. 'Perhaps not but it would not do any harm for them to know what dangers they might face.'

The girl grinned. She had cleaned up well and she clearly knew the charm her snub-nosed beauty gave her. 'Volcanoes. Orcs. Goblins. Earthquakes. Savage animals. They already knew, or could have guessed.'

'Anything else? Your father didn't mention any evil sorcerers, curses on the treasure, fearsome dragons, huge monsters, did he? And when was the last time you saw him anyway?'

'I told you. Ten years ago more or less, before he left on his final voyage. I begged to go with him, but he said I was too small.'

'Very touching,' said Felix, unsure quite why he was so annoyed. There was something about the woman that made him suspicious. 'Do you expect us to believe that the local folk just let a pirate live among them?'

'In Tilea things are very hard, Felix Jaeger. There is little difference between a pirate and a fisherman, sometimes. My father returned to his village often, and his relatives were always pleased to see them. He lived like a prince and he was generous.'

'And what of your mother. Was she not some sort of daemon worshipping sorceress?'

'Lies. My mother was a simple Tilean farmer's daughter.' There was a slightly hysterical tone to her voice. Felix had obviously touched a raw nerve. He felt an obscure urge to apologise, but he did not. He was still nettled by the fact that the girl had not mentioned the orcs. It felt a little like a betrayal, although he was not quite sure why it should. He had known her for less than a day. He simply stared at her.

'There was something else,' she said, glancing at the dwarf.

'Yes,' said Felix.

'My father mentioned that there was something that lived in the ruins, a monster that guarded a magical gem as big as your fist. It was too powerful to be overcome by his men. He swore he would return with a greater force and overcome it. That was the last time I saw him.'

Gotrek looked interested now. Talk of mysterious monsters was a sure way of getting his attention. Felix wondered how much the girl knew of the slayer cult and whether she was deliberately pitching this story at Gotrek. She was clever enough, he was sure. There was clearly more to this woman than met the eye.

'No need for us to worry about that,' said Felix. 'We'll be happy with Redhand's treasure.'

'I don't know about that, manling,' said Gotrek, just as Felix had feared he would.

'You'll get a chance at both. My father left his treasure in the city.'

'How convenient,' said Felix. He definitely had the feeling that they were being manipulated. Still, he could understand why. Katja Murillo had neither ship nor crew, and words were her only way to get them to do what she wanted.

From somewhere down below came the sound of a single musket shot. Felix was startled, but it was not repeated. Perhaps it had been a signal for them to return.

'We'd best be getting back,' he said. 'The others might need our help.'



5 Into the Jungle

WHEN THEY returned to the beach they discovered Urli had shot a deer. The dwarves were excited, for this would be the first fresh meat they had seen in days. Already someone had started to build a fire on the beach from driftwood and fallen branches. Urli was at work gutting and skinning the creature. A boat had been sent back to invite more of the dwarves to the feast. It looked like only a skeleton crew would be left aboard for the night. Felix did like this situation at all.

It was not just dwarves the ship's boats had brought, there was ale as well. Soon the fire was blazing merrily; the deer was being roasted along with yams and tubers the shortbeards had collected.

Despite feeling the tug of the bottle, Felix did not drink anything stronger than water. He lacked the dwarves' ability to see in the dark and their keen senses of hearing and smell, so he wanted his head clear. At night, the sense of danger had increased, although there was nothing physically menacing to be seen. The white breakers rolled cheerfully to the shore. The larger moon, Mannsleib, viewed its face in the mirror of the waters. Morrsleib had yet to appear.

Gotrek too seemed subdued. He held a tankard in one hand, but did not drink with his usual gloomy relish. Often he would leave the fire and the tales and songs of the sailors to go stand at the jungle's edge and peer into the dark. He seemed to be considering actually going into the jungle to hunt. Felix was glad that he did not.

He was equally glad when the dwarves decided to return to their ship about midnight when the meat was gone and the fire was low. Most of them, save a few who were already too inebriated to move, rowed

drunkenly back to the ship. Felix was not too thrilled when Gotrek decided to remain on land, but he hunkered down on the beach with his back to the jungle and stared out at the distant running lights of the steamship.

He was surprised when a few minutes later, Katja dropped down beside him. She offered him a tankard of ale, but he shook his head.

'I wanted to thank you for saving me from Goldtusk,' she said. 'I didn't do it very well at the time. You can understand why, I hope. Things were crazed. Emotions were running high...'

'Think nothing of it,' said Felix, unwinding a little. Perhaps she was not so bad after all, he thought. But still there was something about her that unsettled him. She seemed determined to put him at his ease.

'Its lovely here, don't you think?' she said, gesturing towards the sea. Felix understood what she meant, but he could not quite bring himself to agree.

'It is, but there is something about this place I don't like.'

The girl sighed. 'Aye, you are right. It looks beautiful by day or by night, but there is a presence here that sometimes makes my blood run cold.'

'Do you really think your father's treasure is here?'

'Aye. I am certain of it.'

'Why did he pick this place? There must be a dozen more welcoming islands in this chain.'

'Perhaps that is why he picked this place. He knew it would be shunned.'

'That makes a certain amount of sense, but if it had been me, I would have left this island undisturbed and gone somewhere else.'

She shrugged. 'Something brought him back here to his doom. I am sure of it. He wanted that gem more than he ever wanted anything.'

'Why?'

'I'm guessing he thought it held the secret of great power and eternal life.' Felix almost laughed, but there was something in her voice that compelled belief and undercurrents of the same lust she claimed had driven her father.

'That sounds more like something your mother would want.'

'My mother was a normal mortal woman.'

'Narli seems convinced otherwise...'

'Many dark tales followed Redhand and his crew. The same tales have dogged many other pirates.'

'They have not always been lies.'

'Perhaps not. Why are you travelling aboard a ship full of dwarfs?' Felix laughed at the transparently obvious attempt to change the subject.

'A long story. In a moment of drunken madness years ago, I swore an oath to follow Gotrek and record his doom in an epic poem.'

'He does not seem to have found it yet.'

'You have no idea how strong Gotrek is. I have lost count of how many monsters he has killed.'

'He certainly killed a lot of orcs today.'

'He hates orcs.'

'I have heard it said dwarfs hate anything that is not a dwarf.'

'They don't hate humans. They are allied with us.'

'They are allied with your Empire. That's something different.'

'I suppose it is. What's Tilea like?'

'Beautiful. Rugged. Poor. Wealthy nobles, ancient city states. Corrupt. There are many prejudices, many superstitions. There are many wars. Our men become mercenaries and bandits and seafarers...'

'Your women too, it seems.'

'I am a seafarer, yes.'

'And you came looking for pirate gold.'

'Why not? The people who it belonged to once have no use for it now.'

Felix felt like reminding her that it was her father who killed them, but he did not. Maybe she was no more responsible for who her father was his own, than he was. Gustav Jaeger was a wealthy merchant after all, and no man became as rich as his father without having a few crimes on his conscience, Felix was sure.

He lay back and gazed up at the stars. They looked different here than in the cold skies of the Empire. He wondered why that was, and filed it among the many questions he could not answer. He noticed that Katja had stood up and was looking back over her shoulder.

'The little dwarf is taking an awful long time to come back,' said Katja.

Felix realised she was right. He rose to his feet and strode over to where Gotrek sat slumped by the fire. 'Mobi is taking a long time about making water.'

'What do you want me to do about it manling, go and give him instructions on how it's done?'

'Maybe something happened to him.'

'Mobi!' Gotrek bellowed, startling some drunkards awake, and not a few animals under the tree line as well by the sounds of it. 'Mobi!'

There was no response. Gotrek got up and stomped over to where the shortbeard had last been seen. There were tracks in the sand leading in one direction, but none coming back. Felix's unease returned. He did not like this at all.

They moved along the edge of the woods but found no sign of the youngster at all. 'Maybe he wandered off into the woods and got lost,' said Felix unconvincingly.

'Maybe. There's no sense in looking for tracks now. It will have to wait until morning.'

But when morning came they found no tracks either, and no sign of where or how the shortbeard had vanished. The search parties found no trace.

Katja led the dwarfs deeper into the forest. There were ten of them, the toughest of the marines, led by Urli. Ahabsson had elected to stay with the ship and supervise the repairs. Felix supposed it showed that the captain trusted them. On the other hand, they were not about to go anywhere without the ship, so he could afford to.

Now they were on solid ground again, the dwarfs had broken out far more traditional war gear. They wore chainmail and carried shields on their backs. They had helmets too, but in the sweltering heat most left them dangle from their straps around their necks. All of the dwarfs carried muskets or crossbows, except Urli who carried a wicked-looking blunderbuss. Even Felix had borrowed a couple of pistols from the captain and stuck them in his belt. He had donned his old chainmail shirt. Even though it turned clambering uphill in the enervating heat into a nightmare, he was glad of its protection. Only Gotrek and Katja wore no armour.

There were mosquitoes in the jungle, and leeches and large ants with a fiery bite that Felix discovered for himself when he tried to brush them from his armour with his bare hands. The dwarfs looked as out of place among the lush tropical vegetation as orcs at an elvish wedding. Felix did not feel any more at home himself. He had grown up in Altdorf, the capital of the Empire and would much have preferred to be back there now.

Only Katja gave no signs of unease as they followed the stream along deeper into the woods, and Felix suspected that was merely because she masked her feelings well. She sat on the bole of a toppled palm tree and took a swig from her flask. The dwarfs stood around peering off into the gloom, swigging ale from leather bladders.

'What now?' Felix asked. 'What are we looking for?'

'An old road of some sort, or a path. There was a line on the map that could only have been that.'

'You're placing an awful lot of faith in a design on a jewellery box, aren't you?'

'My father was a cunning man, Felix Jaeger, and a meticulous one. Also I can recall him speaking of some ancient highway that ran across the island through the jungle.'

Felix realised exactly what a wild goose chase they were on. They were relying on this girl's memories of a pattern on a box, and her scanty recollection of her father's old stories to guide them across an island as large as an Imperial county in search of a treasure that might or might not actually be there. And that was assuming Katja was telling the truth, a thing of which he was not entirely sure.

Only dwarfs would leap at such a long shot, he thought, and then realised that he was deluding himself. Many adventurers had done far stranger things on the strength of even vaguer rumours. He and Gotrek had done such things themselves. And, he supposed, they had nothing better to do while the ship was being repaired.

When he considered things, Felix realised that Ahabsson was risking nothing save the lives of the marines. All of the essential crew, the engineers, gunners and sailors were still aboard ship. The captain had insisted on keeping them there, despite their clamour to accompany the treasure hunters. If the

search party never returned from the jungle, he could simply finish repairs, up anchor and sail away. Felix wondered how much credence the captain really put in the girl's story, and realised that it did not need to be much. He was gambling the lives of his passengers and some of his warriors against the possibility that there might be loot to be had. That was all. Felix felt his respect for the captain's business acumen rise in proportion with his resentment of it.

'Once we find the highway, what then?' Felix asked. He realised that every dwarf present had fallen silent as they waited for the girl's answer.

'I will let you know when we get there,' she said. Now they were in the forest, Felix realised her manner had changed. It was far more regal. She had assumed the bearing of someone who was used to being obeyed without question.

'What if something should happen to you?'

'You'd best make sure it doesn't,' she said, laughing, but it was obvious there was some real mistrust there.

'We'll do our best,' he said, as she got up and made ready to go again.

They found the road at noon. In many places it was overgrown. Long grass had sprouted through cracks in the stone giving the impression of great age. It was made of dressed stone, and there were weather eroded patterns on it that reminded him of things he had seen a long way away on the other side of a continent.

'This looks a little like the stone work we saw on the Paths of the Old Ones, and the temples in Albion,' he said to Gotrek.

'Aye, manling. I wondered when you would notice. They are not exactly the same though. More like human copies of those ancient runes.' Katja shot them a sidelong glance.

'You have been to Albion?' she asked. Felix nodded.

'You are extra-ordinarily well travelled.'

'Some people would say so,' said Felix, pushing ahead of the dwarfs and following the path deeper into the jungle. He had very dark memories of the Paths of the Old Ones and no wish to relive them. Leaves from overhanging branches stroked his face. The screech of parrots mocked him.

'Come back, Felix,' he heard the girl shout. 'You are going the wrong way.'

'You think the Old Ones have been here?' Felix asked Gotrek as they strode along. The slayer tipped his head to one side as he considered his answer.

'Perhaps. This is not orc work.'

Felix noticed that the girl was staring at them. 'What do you know of the Old Ones?' she asked. 'I thought only scholars and sorcerers possessed that lore.'

'Very little. We encountered some of their handiwork once. A long way from here. You give the impression of knowing more about them than I.'

'My father was a learned man in his own way. He claimed some pre-human race had made the temples and the city, but that the orcs had taken them over for their own. It's more likely that men lived here after the Old Ones and before the orcs. The Old Ones are long gone. I have talked with many scholars about them myself.'

'Ask five scholars about the Old Ones and you will get fifteen opinions,' said Felix. 'There is little known for sure about them.'

'I am more interested in the treasure, anyway,' said Katja, but there was something in the look of her that made Felix disbelieve that.

'The Old Ones left many guardians for their temples,' said Felix, remembering some of the vile monsters they had encountered in Albion. 'And much of their work was corrupted by the coming of Chaos.'

'Is that one of fifteen opinions, Felix Jaeger?'

'No, that comes from bitter experience.' Felix's thoughts turned to the monsters of Albion, ancient guardians corrupted by the power of Chaos. Could the same kind of creatures be present on this island? Felix feared it was all too likely.

Night found them still toiling along the ancient road. It had led them up jungle-covered hills and down into tree filled valleys. It had passed near stinking swamps and festering bogs, but over time Felix knew that they were climbing slowly upwards towards the great volcanic peak at the mountain's heart.

'Could your father not have picked an easier place to bury his treasure?' Felix asked, surveying the seemingly endless jungle that lay before them. He felt every extra pound of the chainmail now, but was more reluctant than ever to take it off. He

slapped a mosquito that had settled on his cheek. His hand came away splotted with blood, most likely his own.

'I think the idea was to make it difficult to find,' the girl replied with maddening equanimity.

'I would have thought burying it on an island not found on civilised maps would have gone a long way towards ensuring that.'

'Aye, but these islands are not unknown to pirates, merchant voyagers, and the dhows of Araby. Elvish ships pass this way occasionally as well.'

Her words caused a stir of grumbling among the dwarfs, which did not in the least surprise Felix. The animosity between elves and dwarfs was age old and bone deep. Just the faint possibility of elves finding this treasure would keep the crew searching from now until doomsday. Felix wondered if Katja knew that, and then wondered why he was so suspicious. Maybe it was this island he thought. There was something about it that bred an atmosphere of fear and mistrust. He hoped that was just his imagination.

Ahead of them another small ruined tower emerged from the jungle. Urli returned from inspecting it. 'There's orc marks all over the place. Recent, but not fresh. Looks like there are greenskins on the island, for sure.'

'Good,' said Gotrek. 'My axe thirsts.'

Felix wished the dwarf had not spoken quite so loudly. He could not quite rid himself of the thought that there was something out there listening.

They decided to camp for the night in the ruins. It was warm, so there really was no need for a fire, but Felix was glad when they built one anyway. Dwarfs might be able to see in the darkness but he could not, and it would help to keep wild beasts at bay. Hopefully, the thick jungle all around would keep them from being spotted by watchful eyes.

Felix lay down in a corner of the tower, and watched the dwarfs draw lots to see who would stand sentry. He and the girl were excluded from the process, which left him feeling at once glad and vaguely insulted. He was sure it reflected some dwarfish prejudice against human hardihood, and he mentioned it to Katja.

'Perhaps they simply want sentries who can see in the dark,' she said. 'And I don't blame them. Now it's time to sleep.'

Felix found that sleep did not come easily. At night the jungle was just as loud as during the day. Things crashed through the trees. Raucous birdcalls erupted at odd moments. Out there he knew things were killing and being killed, and eaten. In here the mosquitoes whined annoyingly close to his face. The roof of the tower was long gone, and he could see stars through the clear patches in the canopy of leaves overhead. He felt infinitely far from home, and almost as far from safety. Even though the *Storm Hammer* was only just over a days march away, she might as well be on the far side of a moon for all the difference it made. The expedition was completely isolated.

He wondered whether the ruins would contain an opening into the ancient extra-dimensional warren of the Paths of the Old Ones, and if so, was the corrupting influence of Chaos seeping through there? He shivered when he thought of the daemonic creatures he had encountered, and his hand stole towards the amulet that the elvish mage Teclis had given to him. To his surprise, he found that it was cool, which was usually a good sign. It grew warm in the presence of inimical sorcery. If the amulet was responding to some threat, it did not appear to be imminent.

Gotrek rose to his feet and moved towards the entrance. His cocked his head, listening for something, and then returned to his place, where he sat with his back to the wall and his good eye focused on the entrance. There was one who was not going to be caught off guard, Felix thought, stifling a yawn. Sleep snuck up on him before he was even aware of it.

Just before consciousness left him, he thought he saw a dark silent shadow pass between himself and the stars.

The rain woke him. It was dark and droplets sizzled down in the vanishing remnants of the fire. The dwarfs paid it not the slightest heed. Felix scratched at an insect bite and rose to his feet. He grabbed a handful of waybread and dried meat from his backpack and stuffed it into his mouth. The dwarfs and Katya were ready to move.

The rain was warm but it seeped through his tunic and britches and made him uncomfortable. He did not complain though, knowing that it would simply expose him to the mockery of the dwarfs.

'Where's Snelli?' Urli asked. 'If he wandered off and found a place to kip instead of taking his watch, he'll feel my boot on his backside. Snelli!'

The shout echoed through the wood, startling the birds and smaller animals, but there was no response. Once again, they found themselves searching for a missing dwarf. They found tracks leading off to the edge of the wood, where the dwarf had gone to relieve himself, but after that, just as with Mobi, they vanished.

'Sorcery!' Urli muttered. Gotrek shook his head. He looked upwards into the trees. Felix followed his thoughts. Maybe something had grabbed the dwarf from above and carried him off along the branches. His thoughts returned to the shadow he had seen the previous evening. It might just have been a figment of his imagination, but he thought he had better mention it.

'If you saw something why did you not wake us?' asked Urli.

'I was asleep by then, and it might just have been something I dreamed.'

'And it might not.' The dwarfs were grumbling amongst themselves again. They were a hard crew, but they were out of their element, and two of their number had disappeared without any explanation whatsoever. Felix could understand why they were upset. There was something out there that could sneak up on a wary dwarf in the dark without detection, and carry him off in silence. This alarmed them all.

Only Gotrek looked undismayed as they set out along the old road, but Felix noticed that even he kept a careful eye on the branches overhead. At noon they paused to eat. Ignoring all entreaties Gotrek moved off into the woods alone. He had drunk a lot of ale and reeled visibly. Felix thought this unusual, for normally the slayer could consume barrels of the stuff without seeming the worse for wear. He decided he had better follow him, and strode off in the direction he had headed. He entered a grove of trees where the branches were thick overhead. Gotrek sat with his back to one of the trees, his head lolling drunkenly.

Suddenly a noose of rope dropped from above. This time the overconfident attacker had picked the wrong target. Before the loop of rope could close over his neck, Gotrek's eyes snapped open and he grabbed it. A sharp tug brought two tattooed goblins tumbling down out of the tree. The axe flashed and before either body hit the ground, it was relieved of its head.

'There'll be fewer disappearances now,' said the slayer. Seeing Felix's quizzical look he added, 'They have been following us overhead all day.'

'You think there will be more?'

'Almost certainly, manling. The signs are getting more numerous the further inland we go.'

'That's reassuring,' said Felix, following the slayer back to where the expedition rested. He showed no signs of drunkenness now.



6 Treasure, Traps and Guardians

LATE AFTERNOON found them high up the volcano's side. The road had ended. They looked down into a valley full of ruins. Once there had been a large city here, Felix was sure. Several of the ruins were stepped pyramids that reminded him of things he had seen in Albion. Others were massive halls, perhaps palaces. The jungle had swallowed the place. Trees filled what had once been streets. Creepers obscured the walls of many buildings. It had been an age since this place was occupied.

'Quiet as an elvish wake,' muttered Narli.

'This the place?' Gotrek asked. Katja nodded.

'I hope we don't have to search it all,' said Urli.

'No. We find the central hall. That's where my father left his treasure.'

'And this magical jewel?' said Gotrek.

'That's there too.'

'Let's get on with it then.'

They pressed on through the heavy undergrowth and down into the ruins of the dead city.

'Quiet here, isn't it?' said Felix.

'It was until you started talking, manling,' said Gotrek. The slayer seemed preoccupied, straining to hear something, his head tracking from side to side warily.

'It is though,' Felix insisted. The quiet was unnerving after the cacophony of the jungle. It seemed like even the beasts were scared into silence here, and Felix did not blame them.

Katja led them onwards through the streets. They were laid out in a rectangular grid pattern between the pyramids and the palaces. They would have been easy to navigate before the jungle came.

'Makes you think, doesn't it?' he said to Katja, just to break the unnerving quiet.

'About what?' she asked. Like the slayer, she seemed preoccupied, but in her case it was doubtless because she was so near to finding her father's legacy. Felix could see the tension and excitement in her very stance. Her face was pale. Felix doubted it was because of fear.

'About how this happened. Maybe one day Altdorf will be like this, swallowed by the endless forests.'

'We can only hope, manling,' muttered Gotrek. He glanced at the nearest tree as if considering taking his axe to it. 'I hate trees,' he muttered apropos of nothing.

'You've come to the wrong place then,' said Felix.

Urli returned from scouting along a sidestreet. 'There are orcs here,' he said. 'In this city. Tracks are everywhere. Climbed up onto the roof. I thought I saw our friend Goldtusk and a horde of goblins.'

Felix looked at the dwarf. 'What is he doing here?'

'He knows the treasure is here somewhere,' said Katja. 'I told him.'

'It's more than you told us,' said Felix. 'When did you get so friendly with him?'

Felix noticed that Katja's expression was angry. Her fingers were flexing in complicated patterns that reminded him of the way Max Schreiber's used to when he was about to cast a spell. Did the girl know sorcery, Felix wondered? Abruptly she seemed to realise what she was doing and her expression changed.

'When he threatened to torture me,' she said. 'I had to tell him something.'

'If we hang about here,' said Urli. 'He'll come and torture us all. He has quite an army of those little savages.'

'Excellent,' muttered Gotrek. 'Lead me to them.'

'At least let us get the treasure first before you start a fight,' said the marine. 'Not all of us have shaved our heads.'

Gotrek considered this. Like any dwarf he was subject to goldlust.

'Good idea,' he said. 'First the gold, then the killing.'

The place had once been a palace, and a big one, perhaps the home of the city's ruler. Katja led them through one massive entranceway and down a long hall. Felix was in no way surprised to see that this was lit by glowing green gems, set in the ceiling. Such gems had lit the Temple of the Old Ones on Albion.

A strange glow coming from one of the chambers attracted Felix's attention. Cautiously he moved through the doorway to check it out.

As he did so, hot air washed over his face. His eyes felt suddenly dry, and his skin taut. He moved cautiously forward, with the slayer at his side. Ahead of them was a pit from which emerged an orange-red glow. He made his way to the very edge and saw a long way below what looked like molten rock.

'Lava,' said Gotrek. He looked baffled. 'Why would anyone build a palace with vents leading down into a lava flow?'

'Perhaps they wanted to heat the place,' said Felix, not entirely facetiously. The slayer shook his head as if he took the suggestion seriously.

'On a tropical island? No. They must have had some other purpose.'

'Sorcery?' Felix asked. He could not imagine how this could be but it was one possible explanation.

'Maybe,' said Gotrek. 'Perhaps it was a place of sacrifice?'

Felix shivered. The slayer's words made a terrible sort of sense. 'You mean they propiated the mountain with human sacrifices?'

'They would not have to be human, manling. But yes. It would not be the first time this sort of thing has occurred in history.'

'The Old Ones were too civilised for that,' said Felix.

'No one, least of all you, knows what the Old Ones were like. Perhaps they were some sort of degenerate remnant of the Old Ones who fell into barbarism. Or perhaps this place was not built by the Old Ones, but one of their slave races, or someone else entirely.'

Felix could see something about this place had caught the slayer's imagination. That had been just about the longest speech he had ever heard Gotrek make that did not concern the sad decline of human civilisation or how much better things were in the old days. He sensed eyes on them and turned to see Katja and the dwarfs standing in the doorway staring at them. The dwarfs looked impatient. The girl looked thoughtful. He wondered how much of what they had said had been overheard.

'We'd best be getting on,' said Urli. 'There's greenskins about, remember?'

Gotrek looked contemplatively into the firepit for a moment, then spat into it. Felix felt no inclination to do the same. He was too busy wondering what it would be like being thrown into that pit. He did not want to consider what thoughts might run through his mind during that last long fall. He stood looking into it for a while, until he realised that the others had left without him, then he raced to catch up. Instinct told him that this was no place to wander alone.

They made their way down a central aisle until they came to a large square open, to the sky, with an altar in it. The altar was covered in carvings of some sort of lizard-like beings.

'This is the place,' she said.

'I don't see any treasure,' said Urli.

'My father discovered this by accident,' she said, moving over and beginning to twist the carvings on the altar. Gotrek nodded as if he understood what she was doing. He strode straight over to one gargoyle and tugged at it. Instead of breaking, it moved, and a moment later there was a grinding sound as the altar slowly slid into a new position, revealing a flight of stairs leading down into the darkness below.

'Amazing that he managed to inscribe all this on the lid of a jewellery box,' said Felix sardonically. Katja shrugged.

'There was a tale he told me when I was a child, about a princess and a dragon and a hidden treasure. As soon as I saw this altar I recognised it, and knew what to do.'

'Whatever you say.'

'Why do you doubt me, Felix Jaeger?'

'I don't doubt you. I just think there are things you are not telling us.'

'Of course there are. When this is over and we have time I will gladly tell you the story of my entire life if you so desire, but at the moment we must hurry.' She strode down into the stairwell and vanished. Events were moving too fast now. There were orcs about, and Felix felt sure that Katja was deceiving them in some way.

'I wonder if this goes all the way down into the lava pits,' said Gotrek nastily. Felix wished he hadn't.

They emerged into a vault. There were more patterns woven into the floor and Felix did not need to be a magician to know that they were of some sorcerous significance. He wished that Max Schreiber, or even Teclis, were here to tell him what they were. Well, perhaps not the elf, not with all these dwarfs present.

It was sweltering hot down here. All of their faces glistened with sweat. Felix felt like he had been stuck inside an oven. He looked over at Katja. There was a peculiar look of triumph on her face. She must be very pleased at getting so close to her father's treasure, he thought. Or perhaps it was something else.

'Be careful,' she said. 'Try not to step on any of those lines.'

'Why not?' Gotrek demanded. 'Scared it will bring us bad luck?'

'No. They form some sort of protective spell here.'

'Now, how would you know that?' Felix asked, but she ignored him. She was already edging closer to the door on the far side of the chamber, carefully moving along the channels formed between the lines. It was like walking a labyrinth, but she eventually got to her goal without incident. The dwarfs followed her. Gotrek shrugged and then did the same. Felix watched them carefully. There was something very wrong here, but he could not quite put his finger on it. Then he noticed that the runes along Gotrek's axe were glowing. He touched his own elvish amulet. It was very warm, more

so even than the heat down here would suggest. Perhaps Katja was right. Perhaps there were sorcerous defences here.

He doubted that it would make much difference if he told anyone. The dwarfs' faces were transformed by goldlust and Katja's by a strange exultation. Even as he watched, Gotrek touched a series of runes, obviously depressing some sort of pressure plate. The massive vault door slid open silently to reveal another chamber beyond.

The dwarfs gave a cry of pure pleasure and leapt through it, oblivious of Felix's shout telling them to wait. Felix could see the glitter of gold in that room, and of something else. Hastily he pushed forward, walking through the mazy pattern on the floor.

The chamber inside was smaller than the outer one, and it held gold indeed. There were piles of it on the floor. Some of it was in the shape of strange square coins with holes in the middle, some of it in the shape of odd draconic masks. There were also chests full of silver and gold that looked more modern and of human design.

For a moment, Felix felt himself being carried away by greed, just like the dwarfs were. They were beyond a shadow of a doubt, rich beyond their wildest dreams of avarice. There was a king's ransom here. But it was what lay beyond that got Felix's attention.

At the far end of the chamber was another large lava pool. A pathway ran out into the centre and from the middle of the bubbling lake rose a stone spike carved with strange runes. Atop the spike was a huge gem. It glowed blood red with its own internal fire. It was very beautiful and even to Felix's untrained eye, it was obvious that this was the greatest treasure present.

Certainly Katja thought so, for she ignored the heaps of gold amid which the dwarfs played and strode straight towards it. Only Felix and Gotrek watched her. The rest of the expedition were too busy whooping with joy. Despite his present avarice, Felix was watchful. He had been in many other treasure chambers and he had never found things so easy. Surely there must be some guardian present.

He was not disappointed. Even as Katja set foot on the walkway, lava gusted up from below. The heat in the chamber,

already intense became more so. Lava had begun to slop up over the edges of the pit.

In defiance of gravity, the lava continued to flow upwards and it flowed into a massive humanoid figure, at least half again as tall as a man. Its skin was molten stone. Veins of darker fire flowed across its surface. When it spoke, its words came out like the bubbling of a pool of magma.

'I am the guardian of this place, mortals. Begone, lest you bring doom upon yourselves and this island. The fire mountain's heart is not for you. Be warned the Ancients bound me here to protect their handiwork and see their spells did not fail. I will not fail in that trust!'

Katja stood for a moment and then looked over at Gotrek. 'Here is a foe worthy of your axe.'

'Indeed,' said Gotrek.

The lava creature bellowed, and stepped over the side of the pit. The floor bubbled where it set foot. There was a stench of brimstone in the air. The dwarfs hastily stuffed their knapsacks and pockets with loot, torn between greed and fear. Fear triumphed as the lava man advanced. A wave of heat came from it that was like the open door of a blast furnace. Gotrek licked his lips and moved towards it.

'What is that thing?' yelled Felix, kneeling to stuff a gold necklace into his own tunic and snatch up a fistful of the strange ancient coins.

'A fire elemental trapped in a body of molten stone,' Katja replied. 'Do not fear. Its long imprisonment has weakened it.'

'I recognise you now, sorceress,' bellowed the elemental as it reached for the woman, 'You failed the last time you came here. You will fail now. I am still strong enough to kill you all.'

'That remains to be seen,' said Gotrek, charging. Felix considered the monster's words. He could not help but feel they were making a terrible mistake here. What did the elemental mean about the last time Katja had been here? Surely she could not have come here before. And why had it called her a sorceress? A terrible suspicion filtered into Felix's mind.

The elemental gave its attention to the Slayer. Flames danced over its body. Molten stone extruded from its left forearm to form a shield. A sword of stone and fire appeared in its right fist. It met the swing of Gotrek's

axe with the shield and riposted with the blazing blade.

Sparks flew on impact, showering over the slayer. Even from where he stood Felix could smell burning hair and flesh. If he felt any pain, Gotrek gave no sign. He returned the creature's blow with one of his own which cracked the creature's shield and bit into its forearm. The elemental emitted a bubbling howl and struck once more. The weight of its blow drove the slayer back. The creature strode forward again, and Felix could see that it left a blazing footprint in the stone behind it.

Taking advantage of the guardian's distraction, Katja had stepped onto the narrow platform, and advanced cautiously towards the glittering gem. Felix was astonished at her greed. Now was not the time to be thinking of grabbing loot, now was the time to follow in the footsteps of the crew, and beat a hasty retreat.

Briefly he considered doing so himself, but knew he could not. He was obligated to at least witness the Slayer's doom before making a run for it. No, more than that, he thought, he was obliged to make an attempt to fight the beast. The gods alone knew how often Gotrek had saved his life. Even if he sought his own death, Felix was honour bound to help him. Steeling himself, he advanced into the chamber.

With every stride the heat became more intense. It radiated from the blazing figure ahead. He was not at all sure how the slayer withstood it. He forced himself to put one foot in front of the other, even though his skin felt like it was about to crack and his eyes felt dry as the desert sands. Even the dreadful heat of the deserts in which he and the slayer had almost died of thirst was nothing compared to this.

Gotrek and the monster continued to exchange blows. The creature was much stronger than the slayer, but Gotrek was quicker. He ducked the burning sword and sidestepped attempts to knock him from his feet with the stone shield. His counterblows bit into the creature's flesh, sending lava splashing like lost blood onto the floor. But the very success of the slayer hampered him. Lava splashed onto his flesh, burning him. Nor did his blows appear to be effective. Each time the creature was hit, its molten flesh flowed together again, and it came on, apparently unharmed.

Felix wracked his brain for a plan. They had faced many monsters in the past, but this one appeared all but invincible, a product of pure sorcery, and it looked like only pure sorcery could stop it. Unable to think of anything better to do, he lashed out at the monster with his sword.

It was like striking rock. The shock passed up his arm along with a wave of heat. He noticed that even the tip of the magical blade glowed cherry red, and it was a weapon that had withstood dragon fire in its time. The elemental responded by lashing out with its shield arm. A wave of crackling heat preceded the blow and Felix threw himself backward to avoid it. He landed on his back and rolled to one side as the monster followed through. Its fist impacted on the floor and sent up a spray of molten stone that set his cloak to smouldering. Felix was suddenly very glad to be wearing his armour.

A swift glance around showed him two things. Katja had picked up the gem, and Gotrek had aimed an enormous swipe at the distracted creature's back. Such was the force of his blow that the elemental broke in two. Its substance seemed to lose all shape and it became a pool of molten stone on the floor.

'At last, I have it,' said Katja. 'The Heart of Fire is mine.'

Her face looked almost daemonic in its triumph and, not for the first time in their career, Felix suspected that he and the slayer might indeed have made a terrible mistake. She reached out and picked up the glowing gem. As she lifted it on high, the earth shook. From deep below, in the lava pit came a sound like the roar of a dragon.

'Foolish mortal, what have you done?' bubbled the elemental as it rose once more, taking on its human shape. 'You have doomed yourselves. That stone was all that kept the mountain quiescent. It was all that preserved the city until the master's return. Now...'

The elemental's words were cut off when Katja gestured and uttered a spell. A wave of cold swept over the monster. Its skin turned greyer as it cooled. Gotrek took advantage of the moment to strike it again, smashing it into a thousand pieces. Then he glared up at the woman.

'What is going on here?'

'I thank you for your aid, slayer. You made a better ally than Goldtusk ever was, even before he turned traitor. Now I suggest you depart this place. Terrible things are going to happen here.'

'One of them will happen to you, girl, if you do not tell me what is going on.'

'This stone is an object of great magical power. Long have I coveted it... since before I was wed to Redhand. He was not strong enough to overcome the guardian. You were. Now I bid you farewell.'

Even as she spoke, her outline shimmered, and before either Felix or the slayer could move. It faded and the woman with it.

'Wizards!' said Gotrek. Felix looked at the space from which the woman had vanished. He was still confused as to what had happened but he needed no great insight to tell him it was time to go. The whole structure shook and lava was beginning to bubble over the mouth of the pit. The slayer seemed to agree, for he too turned to leave.

As he raced up the stairway, Felix considered what the elemental had said. In Albion, the elf wizard Teclis had told him that ancient leylines underpinned the continents, keeping some of them stable. It seemed that the same thing had happened here and that the power had been focused through that ancient gem. Now the gem had been removed, it seemed like terrible volcanic forces had been unleashed.

As they entered the old palace, he heard the howls of orcs and goblins coming from all around. The greenskins had followed them and were now trapped. From all around a terrible orange glow told him that lava was going to swallow the city. Briefly he wondered what had happened to the other dwarfs, then dismissed the thought. Now was a time to think about saving their own skins.

A yell from up ahead told him that he and the slayer had been spotted. The corridors seethed with orc and goblins. Behind them lava bubbled upwards. The temperature had risen. Given a choice between being boiled alive and facing the greenskins, there was only one decision to be made. Ignoring the fact they were outnumbered a hundred to one, they charged directly at the astonished goblins.

Gotrek's axe lashed out, killing everything in its path. It clove right through spears and shields and bodies, leaving red

ruin in its wake. Felix booted a goblin out of the way and took another through the throat with his blade. He strode along in the slayer's wake, protecting his back, from any of the greenskins that sought to flank him. In two minutes of hard fighting, they had battled their way into another huge chamber. All around them the earth shook. Pillars had started to topple. Behind them orange light spoke of the onward rush of the lava. Felix knew that they had to get out soon or the palace would fall on top of them, and bring the slayer's inglorious career to end with no one left alive to write its epitaph.

The sounds of carnage had obviously attracted more and more greenskins; confused and scared by the eruption, they seemed to be drawn towards the fight. In the centre of the chamber was a plinth, where once some statue had stood. Felix looked at the greenskin horde and realised that the end had come one way or another. He exchanged a glance with the slayer, and saw only mad battlelust in Gotrek's one good eye.

'Let's go,' he said and launched himself forward into the fray once more.

They battled forward through the horde, hacking and slaying as they went. All around them was a vast press of greenskin bodies. Felix did not bother with subtle sword play. He merely lashed, killing as he went. In these circumstances, attack was the best and only form of defence. Slowly, they pushed forward through the throng.

All around, Felix could see leering, gibbering faces. Drool dribbled from their lips and glistened on yellow teeth. Plate-sized goblin eyes glared up at him, lantern bright in the reflected light of the lava. Small figures thrust spears at him. Some he parried with his blade. Others were turned aside by his mail. Some scored his flesh, leaving bloody weals. He knew it was only a matter of time before one of them hit something vital. Nonetheless he fought on.

Ahead of him, Gotrek hewed and cleaved as if possessed. Blood flowed from dozens of small cuts, but nothing slowed him down. The terror he inspired in the greenskins worked to his advantage. Sometimes foes froze for a crucial instant before the axe connected. Sometimes they turned to run, and hurled themselves into the press of their companions, tangling themselves with

others and leaving them easy prey for the slayer. Gotrek moved among them like a tiger among small dogs, smashing skulls, pulping limbs and breaking bodies with every blow. Each time the axe swung forward there came a terrible slaughter-house noise, like a cleaver smashing through flesh and bone, and more foes fell.

It seemed impossible that anything could stand in his way, but driven on by weight of numbers and the inexorable push of the crowd, the goblins kept at it. Ahead of them, Felix could see the plinth. A bound took him onto it, and a heartbeat later the slayer followed. Together they looked out over a sea of green faces. The goblins screeched and yammered at them, brandishing spears and shields. Felix could make out details of individual faces now with their long noses and huge eyes and sharp, sharp teeth. Some wore collars festooned with spikes. Others frothed at the mouth as if rabid. At the back of the chamber, he could see Goldtusk with his bodyguard of orcs. The orc pirate recognised him and bellowed with hatred. He and his followers started to push their way through the throng. Felix thought it would be a good idea to avoid them.

The noise of falling stone and toppling pillars was deafening. The heat was intense. Searing yellow orange light illuminated everything. In one brilliant instant the whole scene was seared into his mind, then the goblins pushed forward again, swarming over the base of the plinth and into combat once more.

Felix lashed out with his blade, severing hands that reached for his ankles. He stamped down, crushing the fingers of those who sought to clamber onto the altar. He smashed his sword into faces, slicing flesh and exposing bone. Goldtusk and his lackeys had pushed their way almost within striking distance now. He roared a challenge at the slayer, brandishing both cutlasses high above his head.

Bellowing in defiance, Gotrek threw himself forward into the oncoming mass, like a swimmer diving into a sea of green. For a moment, it closed over him and then he surfaced, clearing a space around himself with his terrible axe, killing anything that came within his reach. Felix followed swiftly.

In a heartbeat, they were engaged with the orcs. Several of them swarmed towards Gotrek. Felix found himself once more engaged with Goldtusk. The orc's blows did not seem to possess their former savagery. 'Where is she? Where is that treacherous witch? Where treasure she promised? Tell me and you die quick. Else you die slow and painful.'

'That's an attractive choice,' said Felix, lashing out with his blade, determined to seize any advantage, he could. Goldtusk wanted him alive, Felix had no such desire to preserve the orc's life. Sparks flew as their blades met. Once more Felix caught a glimpse of how appallingly strong the orc was. Even pulling his blows, he had almost managed to drive the blade from Felix's hands.

A spear point blurred in from the right. One of the goblins had obviously decided to take advantage of his distraction. Felix batted it aside and realised that he had left himself wide open. It was fortunate indeed that the orc captain wanted him alive, he thought, otherwise he would now be a headless corpse. As it was he barely managed to duck in time as Goldtusk smashed the hilt of his sword down on Felix's head. Even the glancing blow sent stars dancing before Felix's eyes. He felt strength drain from him like spilled wine. Desperately, he gathered the last of his strength and put it all into one savage blow at the orc. Goldtusk laughed as he parried it easily with one cutlass. He laid the point of the other against Felix's heart. 'Tell me or you die!' he said.

'Over there,' said Felix, pointing behind the orc. Goldtusk half turned his head. He did not see Katja, instead he saw Gotrek who had just finished butchering his lieutenants. The slayer grinned evilly at the huge orc and attacked.

The duel was brief and intense. Axe and cutlasses flickered almost too fast for the eye to follow. Goldtusk sprang forward, aiming a sweeping blow down at the slayer. Gotrek parried it with the blade of the axe. The second cutlass swept round and for a moment Felix feared that it would connect, but the slayer brought up the haft of the axe, and the blade rebounded from the ancient rune encrusted shaft. Gotrek jabbed the butt of the shaft into Goldtusk's belly. Air was expelled from the orcs lungs as from

a blacksmith's bellows. He bent double, presenting his neck as an easy target. The blade flashed downward and Goldtusk's severed head rolled on the floor. Gotrek had only a moment of stunned silence in which to enjoy his triumph before the goblins let out a horrified roar and charged forward once more.

It was obvious that even the slayer was tiring. He bled from dozens of small cuts. His skin had been burned in many places. Almost imperceptibly he was slowing. Felix knew that it would not be long before he was overwhelmed by sheer weight of numbers. There was no chance of survival.

Then from the back of the goblin horde came the sound of screams. Felix's first thought was that the dwarfs had returned in a vain attempt to save them, but a few seconds of inspection told him this was not the case. The smell of scorched flesh filled the air as the heat intensified once more. Looking back Felix could see that the rear of the packed goblin mass was being drowned beneath the oncoming lava. As their cries reached their comrades' ears panic was beginning to spread.

Felix did not blame them. He felt no great urge to be roasted alive himself. He bellowed, 'We have to get out of here now!'

'I am not running away from a fight with mere goblins, manling!' A savage sweep of the axe clove clean through one goblin and buried itself in the chest of another. There was a horrid sucking sound as Gotrek withdrew his weapon, and the goblin's still beating heart was revealed.

Felix ducked the stab of a goblin spear and took the greenskin through the heart with his riposte. 'It's not the goblins I'm worried about, it's the lava.'

The goblins all around had begun to back away, the ones nearest cautiously, those out of axe reach less so. Gotrek and Felix crashed into them once more, driving the greenskins ahead of them like cattle. The fight had become a rout, although Felix knew it was less thanks to their efforts than the lava. Whatever the reason, he was grateful. Now all they had to do was get out of the city without being overwhelmed themselves.

Once more, the earth shook. Behind them, the pillars supporting the roof toppled, and the ceiling caved in. Hundreds of tons of

rock crashed down, burying alive many of the goblins in the chamber. Any that survived would soon be covered in bubbling magma.

It was indeed time to get out of this place.

They stood on top of the valley, watching the streets below fill up with orange lava. Felix nursed his bruises and was grateful for the fact that the goblins, in their panic, had scattered to the four winds. Overhead, black clouds billowed from the mouth of the volcano as lava boiled up over the top of the crater. Soon it would reach the jungle and fire and terror would begin. Felix bent double and panted for breath. He was tired, but he could not stop the thoughts racing through his head. He felt he understood most of what had happened now. Katja had been the sorceress who had wed Redhand. She had accompanied the pirate on his last fatal adventure when they had found the jewel. No doubt Redhand had died in a futile effort to get it for her. She had made her escape and returned to civilisation and must have spent years preparing for her return to the island. Perhaps she had been captured by Goldtusk, more likely she had made a deal with him and had been betrayed. The runes on her chains had most likely been meant to contain her magic. Gotrek had proven to be an opportune means of overcoming the guardian elemental. That, or something like that, must have been the way it went.

'There goes Redhand's treasure,' said Gotrek mournfully, watching as the central palace was swallowed.

'Not all of it,' said Felix, producing the necklace and coins he had saved.

'There was enough to ransom a dwarf king down there, manling. That would not ransom an elf's doxie.'

'Some people are never happy,' said Felix. 'Let's see if we can find the others and get back to the ship?'

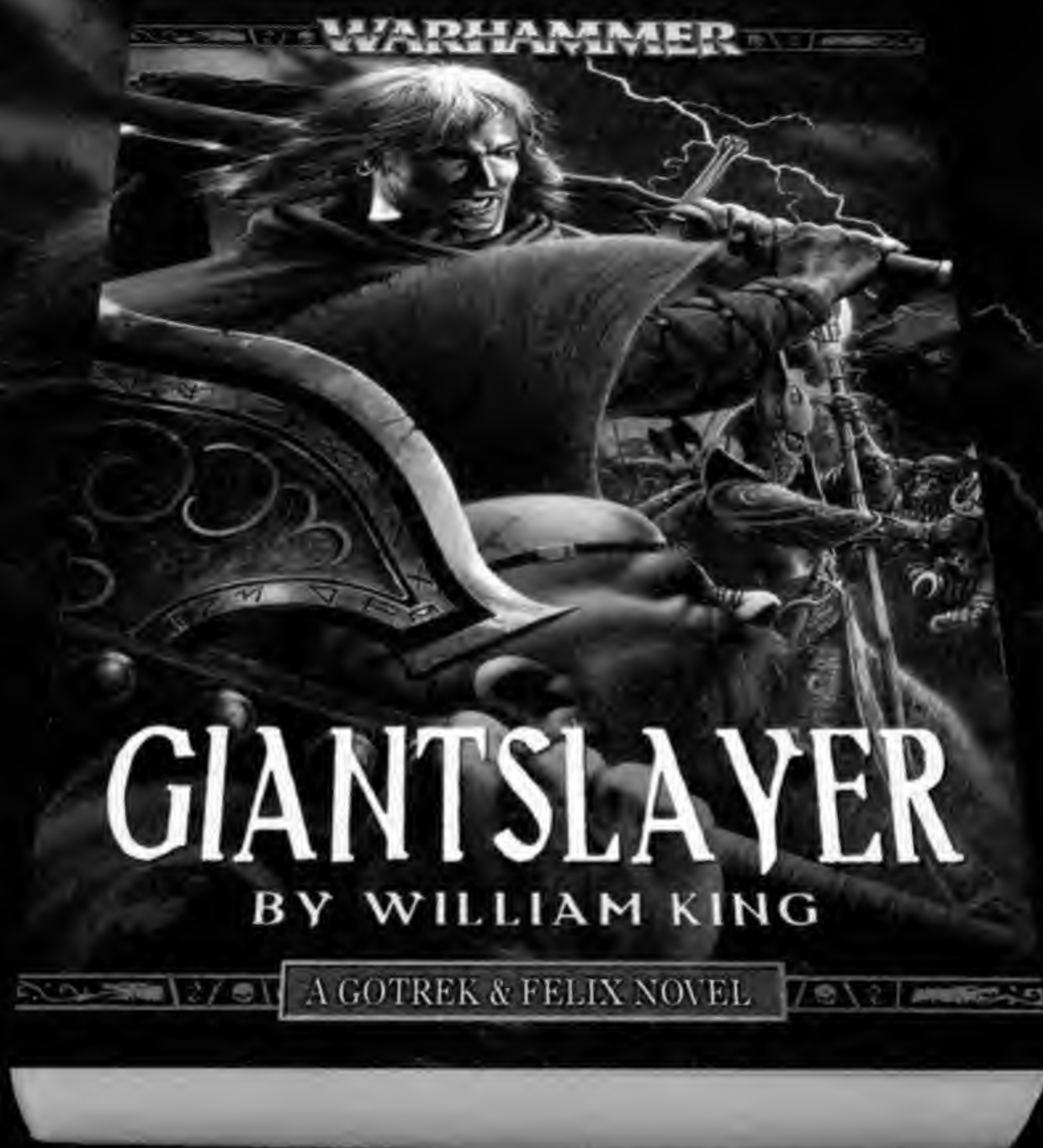
'I would almost rather stay on this accursed island than go out to sea again.'

'You may well have to if we don't get a move on.'

'At least there will be some goblins to kill.'

As they set off on the long trek back to the ship, Felix wondered if they would ever see more of Redhand's so called daughter. He had a feeling somehow, that they had not heard the last of her. ❧

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Gotrek and Felix began as Studio created characters. Did this make developing their characters easier as you took them over for your novels?

Actually I created Gotrek and Felix back in the 80s and GW turned them into characters in the early 90s. It was the same with Thanquol.

**'I HATE TO
THINK
WHICH
ONE OF
THIS PAIR
IS HAROLD
OR BASIL.'**

Has it been a challenge to develop the duo's character progression as their journey continues?

It depends on what you mean by that. Felix has become tougher and more cynical as the series progresses. Gotrek remains much the same as ever. He has not really developed at all except that occasionally we see

slightly different sides of his personality. It's partially because he's a dwarf and much older and set in his ways. Felix is still growing up.

Gotrek and Felix are such an odd couple, but they work so well together. Why do you think this is?

Maybe it's because they are an odd couple that they do work. One contrasts with the other, and each throws the other into relief. I don't think two slayers would work so well together.

So, it's the classic sitcom pairing of opposing characters creating interesting or funny situations, like in *Steptoe and Son* or *Fawlty Towers*?

Yes, exactly although I hate to think which one of this pair is Harold or Basil.

Humour plays a large part in your writing. How important do you think this is to the enormous success of the Gotrek books?

I think humour is a necessary part of the series otherwise things would be just too unrelentingly grim. Again, it's about throwing things into relief – there has to be some let-up from the carnage.

Will Gotrek and Felix travel around all the countries in the Warhammer universe? And do you think they'll be much of it left standing after Gotrek has finished with it?

I would certainly like them to see a bit more of the world. Unfortunately my

secret plan to destroy the Warhammer world one city at a time has been discovered, so I think I will have to leave some survivors.

Will Ulrika show up again in any future tales?

Almost certainly. And with some interesting character developments...

Will Max go back and report for duty with his organisation, or carry on as a friend of the duo? Since they are meeting Teclis in *Giantslayer*, it seems a shame to let him go.

Max and Snorri may be seen again fairly shortly. I was working on a short story about them for this issue of *Inferno!* but got carried away with the novella and ran out of space and time. In the long run we shall be seeing most of the supporting cast again, at least once.

***Vampireslayer* was a fairly dark novel. Will we see any more light-hearted stories before the end?**

I hope so but things seem to be getting progressively darker as the series continues.

Why do you think that is?

Lots of reasons – some of them to do with events in my own life. Some of them to do with the fact that the Warhammer World does get darker the more you learn about it, as Felix is finding out. By the very nature of the adventures he finds out things that most people try to ignore. Also lets face it, Gotrek is moving slowly closer to finding his doom. This is not really a pleasant prospect.

Are you planning to write a prequel to *Trollslayer* where we will actually read in detail how Gotrek and Felix came to meet each other, and perhaps a bit more history about what they did before they had one another to get themselves out of (and into) trouble?

One day I will certainly sit down and write the story of their meeting, for sure. Sooner or later the issue of Gotrek's dark past will have to be dealt with. I have some thoughts about doing a book about it.

I know a lot of our readers will be very pleased to hear that! Any concrete ideas yet, or are you just mulling over the possibilities at the moment?

Well we know pretty much how they meet so that's fixed. I imagine I will probably pick it up when Felix is expelled from university or thereabouts and proceed at the usual breakneck pace towards the meeting. There might be a few adventures set in Altdorf and maybe something to do with Chaos cults. None of it except the bits people already know are set in stone.

Felix has pledged the return of his magic sword to its rightful owners, but has so far failed to do so. Will the origin of the sword or its rightful owners, or anything of its nature, ever be included in any future Gotrek & Felix story?

Ahem, maybe. Something about its nature has already been included in *Dragonslayer*. More may be revealed as things go on.

Are you aware of Gotrek's cameo in 'Warhawk' by Jack Yeovil, written ten years ago and published last year in *Silver Nails*? If so, will the revelation about Gotrek's past, that he was a member of Vastarien's Vanquishers, be referred to again? And was it Jack's idea, or yours?

Yes, I read it first time around. As for the Vastarien's Vanquisher's bit, I know it was discussed around the studio during the original GW book run, but I can't remember whose idea it was originally.

How many books will the entire saga of Gotrek and Felix be composed of?

As many as it takes.

Is Gotrek the Scotsman to Felix's Sassenach?

No comment...

'SOONER OR LATER THE ISSUE OF GOTREK'S DARK PAST WILL HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH.'

How did you become aware of Games Workshop and the Black Library?

I bought *White Dwarf* issue one a very long time ago. I was always aware of GW after that. I found out about the Black Library when Andy Jones asked me to do some writing for it sometime around 1997 I think.

What do you think was the big turning point in your writing career?

Selling my first story was one. Having *Trollslayer* come out was another.

What was your first story about?

Genetically engineered combat soldiers being dropped in the jungles of central America. I believe it's been reproduced on the www.trollslayer.net site.

What was the first thing you ever had published?

It was an article in a fanzine called *Superhero UK*, many years ago. It was a review of the Alan Moore comic book

Watchmen.

As far as you are concerned, is being a full time writer the best job in the world?
Pretty much!

What is the worst job you have ever had?
I was once a civil servant. I absolutely hated it.

How does it feel to have a whole edition of *Inferno!* dedicated to your writing creations?

I am flattered.

Do you have a method for dealing with annoying editors who keep pestering you?

So far I have not been pestered. I can usually communicate my displeasure with someone if I need to.

Did you find writing *Farseer*, whose Eldar characters are so far removed from *Slayers* and *Space Wolves*, an interesting departure?

Yes. I have always liked working on the Eldar. They are very different. I also found writing Janus Darke and Simon Belisarius interesting as well. They are the first 40K 'civilians' I have ever really looked at.

What other character 'types' do you fancy working on in the future?

Have not really thought about it. The only new series I currently have any ideas for is about Tyrion and Teclis, the high elves.

In *Ragnar's Claw*, the young Ragnar develops feelings of a 'mushy' nature towards Inquisitor Isaan. Why did you decide to place this plot strand in the novel, given that attributing Space Marines with emotions of that nature is a rather controversial topic?

I don't think Space Marines having feelings of any sort is a controversial topic. Given that the whole male/female thing has been hard-wired into human brains for several million years, it's hard to see how they could not have such feelings even if they were sublimated in some way. The question in this case is whether they are physically capable of acting on them.

Will Gotrek ever find his doom? (Somebody was bound to ask.)

Absolutely certainly. It's a case of when, not if.

So, ahem, when will that be then?

When I get round to writing it.

Thanks Bill!

Giantslayer is out now, along with new editions of *Trollslayer* and *Skavenslayer*.

The fourth novel in the Space Wolf series, *Wolfblade*, is published in October 2003 in the UK, November 2003 rest of the world.

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MOST NOBLE SCRIBE, RALPH HORSLEY

Your Highness Duke Enrik,

As requested the archivists, scribes and scholars of Praag have assiduously been collecting all records and documents relating to the great victory over the evil forces led by Arkh Daemonclaw, that has signalled the second great crusade against Chaos.

This rich source material includes not simply official records but also personal logs, artists impressions and artifacts.

They are here presented to you before cataloguing in preparation for the writing of the history you desire.

Your ever faithfull,

Slavomir Radicwz
Chief Librarian

innocents die than one
Chaos worshipper lives
- Watch this man

gracious Archprelate,
This letter is a humble plea from a lowly Captain of the watch and devout citizen. Whilst it is clearly of great concern to us all that any taint of chaos within the city be removed mercilessly the zealotry of many of the witch hunters is creating great fear and panic, which could undermine the general morale of the populace.

I also have worries over reports that many innocents have been burned near during these purges.
I humbly beseech his Grace to a more extreme activities

hour of



OBSERVATIONS ON THE ENEMY
WAR EMPLOYED BY THE DEFENDERS
OF PRAAG

Anatomy Anatomy

BALLISTA: FIRES A SINGLE GREAT
DART (5' LONG), WHICH IS CAPABLE OF
PIERCING SEVERAL BOMES. TWIN ARM
TORSION ARRANGEMENT. HORIZONTAL/
VERTICAL ADJUSTMENT. BRASS FLIGHTS
FOR ACCURACY.

TREBUCHET: LARGEST ENGINE
USED. RANGE MODIFIED BY BALLAST,
WEIGHT, AND SLING LENGTH.
CAPABLE OF FIRING UP TO
30 LBS OF STONE-OR
QUICKLIME (WHICH BLINDS/
BURNS THE ENEMY). TWO
A-FRAME SUPPORTS.
WINDLASS OPERATION
FOR ARM. RUNNING
BOARD FOR SLING.

MANGONEL: TORSION POWERED USING
A SINGLE LARGE SKEIN OF HORSEHAIR.
RATCHET SYSTEM LOWERS ARM TO
'LOCKED' POSITION. PROJECTILES
WEIGH 6-8 LBS. QUICK RELOAD.

EMPIRE 'HELLBLASTER'
VOLLEY GUN: ONE OF THESE
FIENDISH DEVICES WAS BROUGHT
FROM NULN.
MULTIPLE CANNON ROTATE UPON A
CENTRAL AXIS. BLACKPOWDER CHARGES
FIRE 2 LB IRON SHOT. 3 BARRELS
DISCHARGE SIMULTANEOUSLY.

pietr,
here is the recipe
for alchemical fire.

I am working to full
capacity- any extra you can
create will help
greatly.

Everlasting Fire.

2 parts distilled red ichor.
1 part brimstone in 30% solution.
3 parts granules of saltpetre.
2 parts oil of draby.
4 parts sulphurous oil.
together under a low fire
not

alfred's
invocation is
essential during
preparation

remember
poor
axel!!



a face with lips sewn shut - the silent death clan, or the unspeakables?

Marshall Petrovsky
I have instructed a scribe to record the banners of the barbarian tribesmen. Perhaps we might identify their clans and better understand the composition of their army.

In Loyalty,
Capt. Yakovlev

a 'great eye'
iron appears on
many banner poles.

a three-headed dog.

the bone-mawers
the death path
probably the
ravenous path.

a flayed man.
The flesh-renders.
This banner
was captured in our sector
by Sergei Novsky.
(May his soul and that
of the fellow used
to make the banner
rest in peace)

a device used
previously by the
yellow claws is
this horned skull.

a grinning
Morshieb.
The moon-kissed
clan.

An exorcised great sword
wielded by a chaos
champion of the
black God - who
shall not be named.
Found outside the
'gate of gurgoyles'.

one of the
vast monoliths hauled
here by hundreds of slaves -
strange lightning plays over
its rune marked surfaces.
any thoughts
on their purpose?

worry about the
influence the sky
winds of magic are
swirling violently over

the power accumulated is awesome.
of lightning flicker out from the enemy
spark off the mighty war machines gather
them:

watched beam after beam
thunder rumbled incessant
the air felt pregnant
constantly.

Dearest Sisters of Merciful Shullaya,
The plague is amongst us, spread by the foul
forces outside our fair cities walls.
Symptoms begin with a wracking cough then
progress to a high fever before buboes appear on the
victims body.

Whilst it is our duty to minister to all
our blessings are not without their
Therefore priority must be
one aiding in the defence

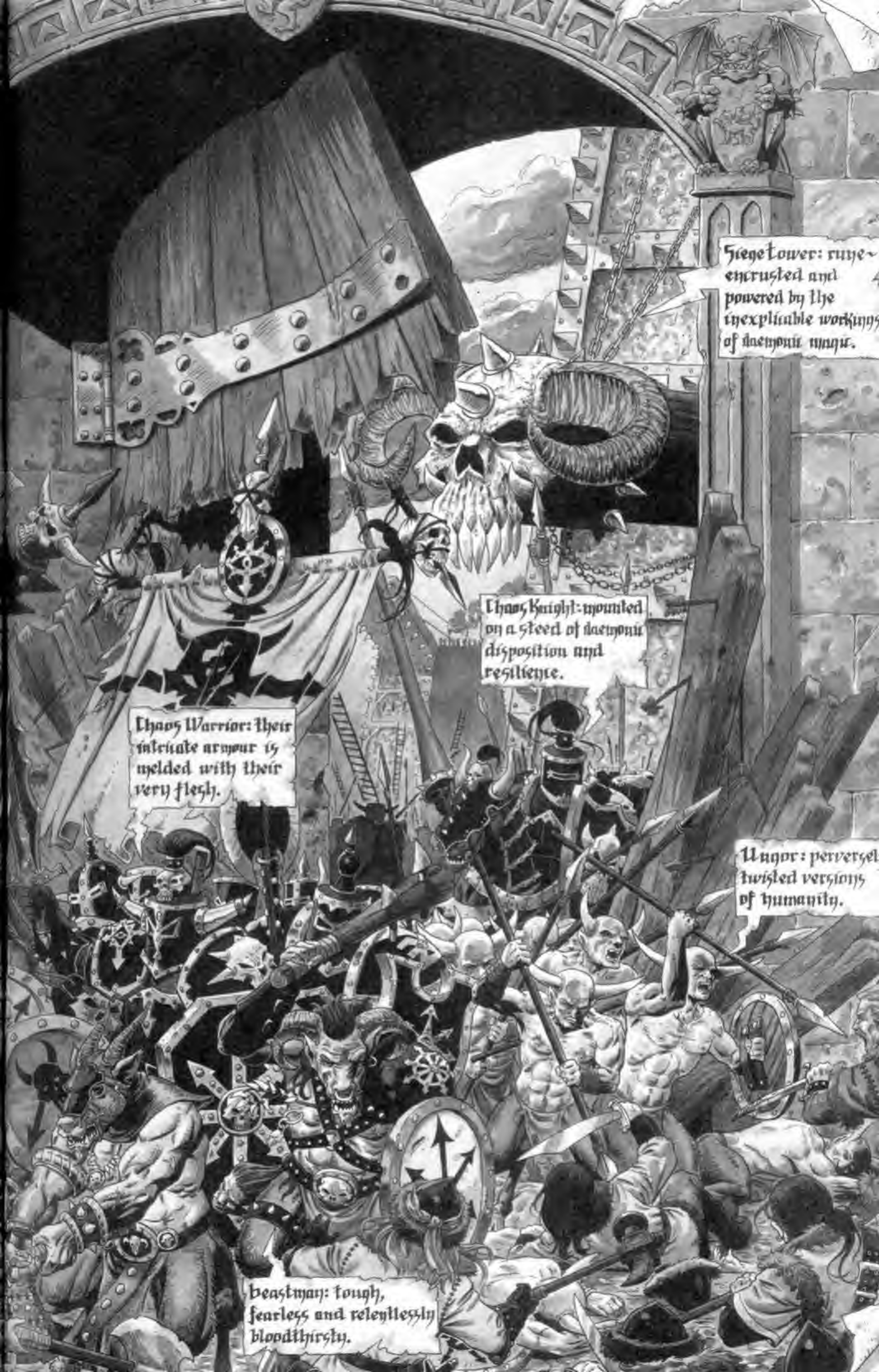
The Fall Of The East Gate.

an artists impression by ~ Leo Myshkin,
depicting the forces arrayed against Prang.

barbarian tribesman:
corrupted dwellers of
the northern wastes.

Whotaur: fearsome, huge,
bull-headed monstrosity.





Siege tower: rune-
encrusted and
powered by the
inexplicable workings
of daemonic magic.

Chaos Knight: mounted
on a steed of daemonic
disposition and
resilience.

Chaos Warrior: their
intricate armour is
melded with their
very flesh.

Ungor: perverted
twisted versions
of humanity.

Beastman: tough,
fearless and relentlessly
bloodthirsty.

the dwarf flying machine. 'Spirit of Grungni, by a name I have tried to fathom its secrets, but its master Malakai Mahakali guards them jealously.

bag made of hide sections containing buoyant gases which causes the whole to float.

I think this is a 'vent' for bags of gas.

steering fins.

cannon port.

I think that the machine may be steam-powered. Large quantities of coal and water were taken on board.

a propellor drives its flight.

passenger cabin.

strangely finned 'bombs' were dropped from the cabin - containing much blackpowder they caused heavy enemy casualties.



Dear Brother Ivan,

By Ulric's mercy I live and the city of Praag has been spared defeat at the hands of its enemies.

I have seen many brutal and awesome sights, too many to recall here, even if my quill did not quiver at the mere thought of them.

Yet strangest of all, and thankfully fighting on our sides, were the Dwarf Slayers. Truly a breed apart they seek death, not life, even in victory. Wherever the fighting was hard and the enemy most fearsome that was where they would be found.

Most powerful of all their kind is a man named Gotrek Gurnisson. Only Ulric knows how many of our foe fell by his rune-encrusted axe. I have attempted a quill portrait, but it undoubtedly fails to capture his true fearless likeness.



I trust all and that we shall meet soon.

Deepest h,

Gnaga

I found the foul warlord's visage terrifying even atop a spike!!

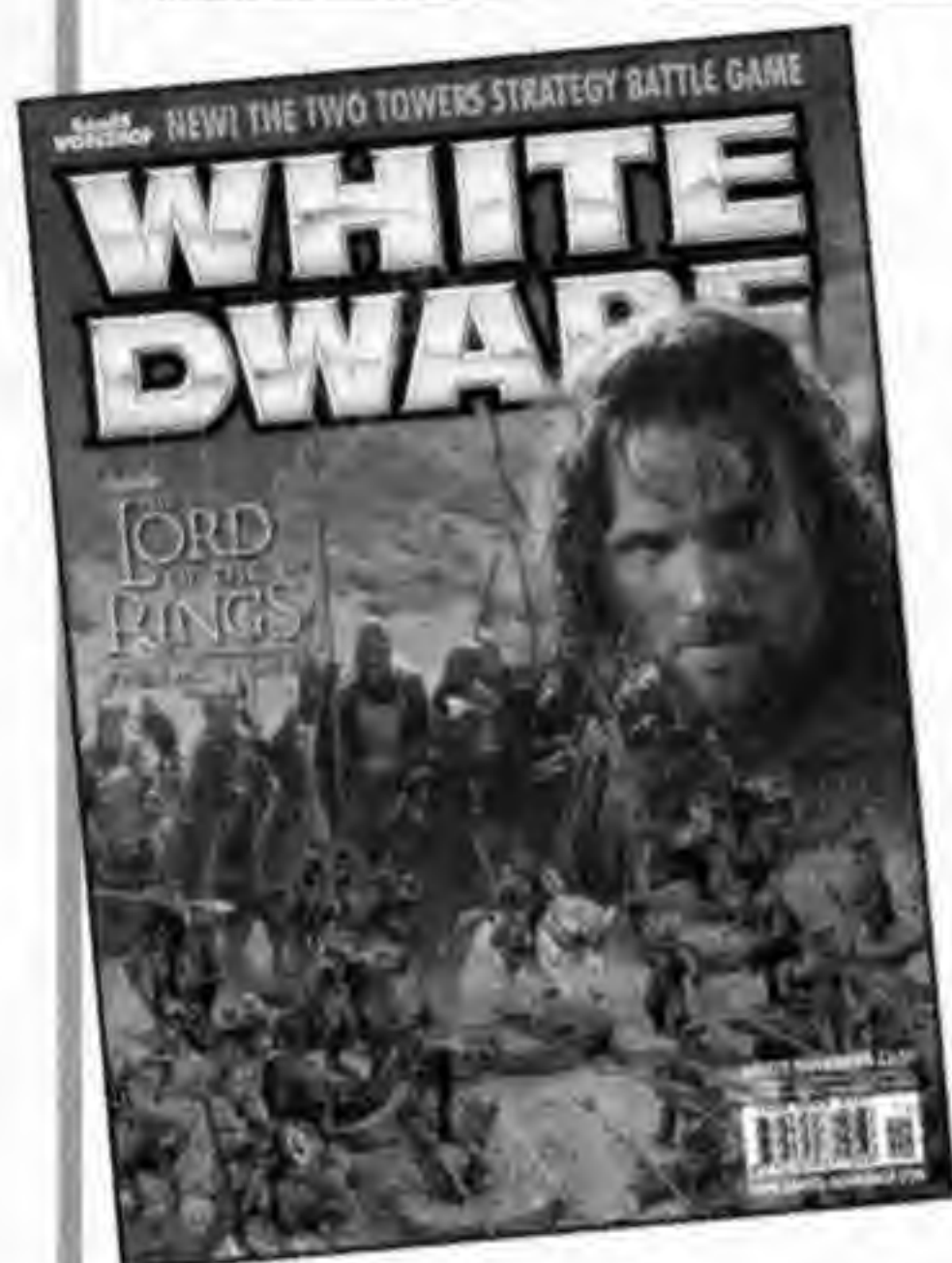
The very metal itself seems alive with the very essence of evil.

I fear that attempting to portray it may be blasphemous...



I had thought that the architecture of Praag was fearsome and twisted - I realise that was nothing compared with what inspired it.

WHITE DWARF



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MY NAME IS *FELIX JAEGER*. MY COMPANION IS THE DEATH-SEEKING DWARF *GOTREK GURNISSON* WHOSE DOOM I AM SWORN TO RECORD IN AN EPIC POEM. WHICH MIGHT COME VERY SOON NOW, CONSIDERING WE ARE CURRENTLY STORMING A *SKAVEN WARP-STONE* MINE FOR THE ELECTOR OF *STIRLAND*.

WELL, IT WAS EITHER THAT OR *HANG*, AND AS *GOTREK* WILL TELL YOU, THAT'S NO DEATH FOR A *SLAYER*.

DIE,
RATMAN
SCUM!

WHERE SLAYERS DARE

A GOTREK & FELIX ADVENTURE

SCRIPT: WILLIAM KING • ART: ROMAN SYDOR

A SANE MAN WOULD DO THIS IN
THE COMPANY OF AN *ARMY*...



DIE DIE
FOOLISH TAILLESS
ONE!

UNFORTUNATELY, IT'S *JUST* ME AND GOTREK.

OF COURSE, ON A GOOD
DAY, HE *IS* AN ARMY.



SOMETIMES THOUGH, THE
QUESTION IS WHETHER...



HORNED
RAT WILL EAT
EAT YOUR SOUL
HE WILL!



I WILL SURVIVE.

DIE!
I WILL...
ARGH







WHOOSH!



I HAVE BEEN IN *TIGHTER* SPOTS...

FORWARD!
QUICK! QUICK!
FOR THE HORNED
RAT.



I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER
ANY AT THE MOMENT.



I AM *NOT* GOING DOWN WITHOUT A FIGHT.



ON THE OTHER HAND.



DOWN
DOWN HOLD HIM
DOWN.

SKRYRE
WARPMASER WILL
INTERROGATE HIM
WANT TO!





NOW I AM READY TO KILL SOME SKAVEN.



THAT SMELL! *WARPSTONE*. THESE MANIACS ARE USING WARPSTONE TO POWER THEIR ROCKET.

YOU WERE AN *ENGINEER*. I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU KNOW HOW TO *STOP* THIS THING.

EASY, MANLING. YOU JUST PULL THIS LEVER.

SNAP!

SNIFF!

TYPICAL *SHODDY* RATMAN WORKMANSHIP!

WE NEED
TO GET OFF THIS
THING. IT'S GOING TO GO
UP LIKE A *BARREL OF
GUNPOWDER* WHEN IT
HITS THE MINE.

YOU
DON'T SAY,
MANLING.

THAT'S
NO DEATH FOR A
SLAYER.

NOT THE MOST DIGNIFIED
EXIT, BUT IT BEATS DYING.

GREAT, BEATEN BY
SKAVEN AND NOW A
MOUTHFUL OF SNOW.

BOOM!

COME ON,
MANLING. WE NEED
TO FIND SOMETHING
TOUGHER THAN THOSE
MANGY RATMEN.

THAT
WAS *ONE* WAY OF
CLOSING DOWN
THE MINE.

THE END

DRIVE
YOUR
ENEMIES
BEFORE
YOU!
THIS
MARCH

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COMPILED BY ANGELA MCINTOSH AND ROBERT CLARK, BASED ON MATERIAL ORIGINALLY
PRESENTED AT WWW.TROLLSLAYER.NET

A

ADOLPHUS KRIEGER

A vampire. He was one of von Carstein's most trusted minions but vanished after the battle of Hel Fenn and von Carstein's defeat, only to resurface in Praag centuries later. Tall, dark and thin, he speaks with a noticeably foreign accent. He will also stop at nothing to get his hands on the Eye of Khemri, a deceptively powerful artefact.

ALBERICHT KRUGER

The Mutant Master. He was a mild-mannered mage who attended Altdorf University at the same time as Felix Jaeger but he has now become corrupted by the Dark Arts he practises.

ALBION

Reputedly a land of perpetual rain and mists, very little else is actually known about it, mainly because it has always been surrounded by spells of great potency intended to ward it from the eye of outsiders.

ALDRED KEPPLER

Known as 'Fellblade', a knight of the Order of the Fiery Heart. He journeyed to Karag Eight Peaks to retrieve the blade Karaghul.

ALDRETH

One of the oldest servants of Teclis and his brother.

ALTDORF

Greatest city in the Old World, Capital of the Empire, and seat of the Emperor Karl Franz II.

AREK DAEMONCLAW

A formidable Chaos Warrior who has succeeded in uniting the four different factions of the Dark powers to march down from the Chaos Wastes and lay siege to Praag. He is super-strong, superfast and near invulnerable.

AXE OF THE RUNEMASTERS

Also known as the Axe of Valek. An ancient artefact of immense power, previously wielded only by the High Runemasters of Karag Dum.

B

BALDURACH

A member of the Council of Truthsayers in Albion.

BELEGAR

Nominal ruler of Karag Eight Peaks, he led the expedition to reclaim the lost stronghold.

BJORNI BJORNSSON

Bjorni is a squat, muscular, repulsively ugly dwarf with a gruesome collection of warts on his face and a particularly huge and hairy one right on the end of his nose. He is crude, lewd and tells some exceptionally tall tales about his sexual conquests, though admittedly he does enjoy surprising success with women, a fact which never ceases to amaze Felix Jaeger. He is first encountered by Ulrika at Karak Kadrin and introduces himself by propositioning her. Though she rejects him, he joins the party on their quest anyway and is one of the seven slayers who go to confront the dragon Skjalandir in its lair.

BLACK COACH, THE

Unmarked coach that travels the Bögenhafen road on Geheimnisnacht, said to be driven by daemons.

BLIND PIG, THE

A tavern on Commerce Street, Nuln, owned by Heinz. Gotrek and Felix were employed as bouncers and it is here that the gutter runners stage their daring attack.

BLUTDORF

A small and particularly squalid village located between Fredericksburg and Nuln.

BLUTDORF KEEP

Rundown castle overlooking Blutdorf, inhabited by the wizard Albericht Kruger.

BOREK THE SCHOLAR

Also known as Borek Forkbeard because he has a huge forked beard which reaches all the way to the floor before being looped back up into his belt.

He is the ancient dwarf scholar who organises

an expedition to the Chaos Wastes to try and find the lost citadel of Karag Dum. It was Borek and his brother Vareg, who brought the last message from Karag Dum before it was swallowed by the Wastes, and though he tried to return at the time, the first mission failed and he was one of only three survivors.

BRAN MAC KEROG

The bear-like chieftain of the mountain men of Carn Mallog whose main passion seems to be greed.

BROCHT

Huge circular stone tower.

BROKEN PICKAXE, THE

Inn situated in the small town of Gelt. Gotrek, Felix and their party stay there en route to the Dragon Mountain.

C

CARN MALLOG

A settlement of brochts on a ridge top and home to Bran Mac Kerog's mountain men. They are massive structures designed to resist

siege and are engraved with runes similar to the tattoo patterns which adorn the faces of the warriors.

CAULDRON OF A THOUSAND POXES

A hideously powerful artefact for brewing diseases. Reputedly stolen from a temple of the Plague God, Nurgle and reconsecrated to the service of the Horned Rat.

CHANG SQUIK

Of Clan Eshin, the assassins. Trained for years in the delivery of silent death. 3rd Degree adept in the way of the Crimson Talon and black belt in the Path of the Deadly Paw. Pupil of the infamous skaven assassin, Deathmaster Snikch.

CHAOS WASTES

A hellish land to the far north beyond Kislev and Blackblood Pass. The armies of the four ruinous powers of Chaos reside there.

COUNT ANDRIEV

Ulrika's distant cousin, a collector of antiques and curiosities. He hires the slayer and his companions to protect his collection and in particular, the Eye of Khemri.

FELIX JAEGER

Born the younger son of a wealthy Altdorf merchant, Gustav Jaeger and his wife Renata, Felix Jaeger always had dreams of becoming a famous poet and scholar. Unfortunately, his promising career was cut short when he found himself expelled from University after accidentally killing a fellow student in a duel. He then became involved in the infamous Window

Tax Riots where he met Gotrek Gurnisson under somewhat fortuitous circumstances, when the slayer pulled him out from under the hooves of one of the mounted cavalry officers sent in to break up the fray.

Unfortunately, the slayer then took exception to nearly being trampled himself, so set about breaking a few heads. Unsurprisingly, both soon found themselves wanted by the authorities.

Later that evening in the Axe and Hammer tavern, Felix heard of the slayer's quest to find a worthy doom, and being slightly worse for wear at the time, swore a blood oath to follow the dwarf and record his demise in a suitably epic poem, never dreaming just what this would entail.

The duo's adventures have seen them journey extensively throughout the Empire, battling the forces of Chaos wherever they find them. Felix acquired the mystical dragon-hilted blade, Karaghul, in a troll's treasure hoard under Karak Eight Peaks and has used it to great effect against the numerous enemies he has fought since, particularly the dragon Skjalandir. Since teaming up with the slayer, he has also thwarted a Skaven invasion, an assassination plot and a great Chaos incursion, and battled true Terror in the lost dwarf city of Karag Dum. He has also found time to meet and fall in love with Ulrika Magdova Straghov, though the affair has been a bitter-sweet experience.

Tall, broad-shouldered and blond, probably the most notable thing about Felix's handsome features is the long, thin scar which mars his cheek, a legacy of his student dueling days. He wears a tattered, red Sudenland wool cloak and though his clothes are of good quality, they have all seen better days; much like the poet himself, in fact.



COUNTESS GABRIELLA OF NACHTHAFEN

A beautiful woman of indeterminate age. Sister-in-law to Rudgar. She also appears to have a mysterious connection to Krieger.

COUNT HROTHGAR

Nobleman and member of the Order. He wants the Children of Ulric dead.

CRANNOG MERE

A strange floating village built in the middle of a lake. The somewhat primitive houses appear to be either on stilts or situated atop small artificial islands and are linked by causeways of mud and logs. The only way of getting out to them is by way of a narrow, winding causeway, cunningly concealed just below the waterline so that it can only be seen from close at hand.

CULUM

A massive and extremely well muscled Albion tribesman who challenges Gotrek to an arm wrestling competition. He is related to Murdo MacBaldoch in some way and married to Klara.

D**DARKSTONE RING**

Stone circle lying between Blutroch and the Standing Stones Inn, to the north of the

Bögenhafen road.

DIETER

A stern, grey-haired man, who looks after the von Diehl entourage. He employs Gotrek and Felix as mercenaries.

DOG AND DONKEY, THE

A tavern in Guntersbad, and the scene of Gotrek and Snorri's epic drinking contest.

DRAGON MOUNTAIN

Under this peak, in an extensive cave system, is where the dragon Skjalandir has made his home.

DRAGON VALE

The valley leading to the Dragon Mountain, which has been devastated by Skjalandir since it has made its home there.

DRAKENHOF CASTLE

A huge castle in Sylvania, it is said to be built on a particularly ill-omened site, a nexus of terrible dark energies, and is a sacred place to the Arisen.

DREXLER, DOKTOR

A physician and scholar in Nuln. He studied medicine in Kah Sabar, Araby. Felix is referred to him by his brother when he starts displaying what could be possible symptoms of the Plague.

GOTREK GURNISSON

Gotrek, son of Gurni was born and raised in the corridors of Karaz-a-Karak and like all citizens of the King's Council, did his military service in the depths below the Everpeak as a youth. Details of the intervening years between then and his meeting with Felix Jaeger are vague, though it is known that he was part of the first ill-fated attempt to find the lost city of Karag Dum. One of only three survivors to return from the Chaos Wastes, when he did so, he was carrying the awesome star-metal rune axe which never leaves his side.

After swearing blood kinship with Felix Jaeger and making him his Rememberer, the pair set out on their travels, the slayer actively seeking his doom, the man simply there to record it. Losing his eye in an epic battle against some greenskins at Fort von Diehl has been perhaps the most noticeable injury the slayer has sustained and though there have been a few close calls, much to his chagrin, Gotrek inevitably lives on to fight another day.

A typical slayer, Gotrek sports the bright orange crest and numerous tattoos which mark him as such. He is huge by dwarvish standards and though he only comes up to his companion's chest, he outweighs him by a substantial margin, all of it muscle. A gold chain runs from nostril to ear and a leather patch covers his ruined eye. He can drink almost as well as he can fight, which is saying something indeed, and he hates trees, boats and elves with a vengeance. It's a pity, then, that the latter plays such a significant role in his latest adventure in Albion, where the forces of Chaos are on the verge of bringing about the destruction of the entire world – unless the slayer can swallow his pride, and work alongside a hated elf to stop it!



E

ELISSA

Barmaid at the Blind Pig in Nuln and Felix's love interest for awhile.

EMPEROR'S GRIFFON

Tavern in the Human quarter of Karak Kadrin.

ENRIK KOZINSKI

The Duke of Praag. A middle-aged man with greying hair, his tendency to see the works of Chaos around him has led to rumours that he shares his father's insanity. His curt manner and fiery temperament belie a gentle and caring manner.

EYE OF KHEMRI

A small, oval-shaped pendant carved from obsidian with a central eye surrounded by odd pictograms of animal-headed people. The stone itself is gripped in a silver hand setting with pointed talons. Found in the rubble of Khemri and also known as the Eye of Nagash.

EYE OF THE LORD, THE

A magical artefact, kept by Kelmain and Lhoigor. A gigantic crystal orb encased in metal, it is used to predict the future.

F

FORGAST GAPTOOTH

A slayer acquaintance of Snorri who killed a troll in a most unusual way.

FORT VON DIEHL

Settlement founded by the von Diehl family and their retainers, following their exile from the Empire.

FRAU WINTER

Sorceress, part of the von Diehl entourage, and mistress to Kirsten.

FREDERICKSBURG

Town in Averland, near Blackfire Pass.

FRITZ VON HALSTADT

Head of Nuln's secret police and a chief magistrate. A tall, gaunt man, von Halstadt is a deadly swordsman and obsessed with the Elector Countess he serves.

G

GARG GORGUL

Huge ogre encountered by Gotrek and Felix below Karag Eight Peaks.

GEHEIMNISNACHT

'Night of Mystery', considered extremely

unlucky by citizens of the Empire. Both moons are full on this night.

GOLDEN BROTHERHOOD, THE

A secret order devoted to seeking Chaos and destroying it. Max Schreiber is a member.

GOLDEN HAMMER

An upmarket restaurant in Nuln which Otto Jaeger takes Felix to, and where Felix sees and recognises Fritz von Halstadt.

GOSPODAR MUSTER

A force of 5000 mounted warriors, led by the Ice Queen herself, that go to aid Praag in its fight against the forces of Arek Daemonclaw.

GOTTFRIED VON DIEHL

Baron of the Vennland Marches, exiled after a conflict with their Sigmarite neighbours.

GREEN MAN, THE

A fortified inn on the road to Drakenhof.

GRIMME

A dwarf slayer, first encountered by Felix in the Shrine of Grimnir. He speaks very little, seeming to be too overwhelmed by some personal grief to allow any kind of connection with others. He is one of the seven slayers who go to beard the dragon in its den.

GRUME OF THE NIGHT FANG

A massive and foul-smelling Khorne warlord who is in league with the Tzeentch sorcerers, Kelmain and Lhoigor. He wants to kill Gotrek and claim his axe for his own, and carries the fearsome Skull Mace of Malarak to help him achieve his goal.

GUNTERSBAD

A small town on the road to Talabheim.

GURAG

A monstrously obese orc shaman who pits his powers and his wits against Teclis, with surprising results.

H

HALL OF THE WELL

The main hall housing Thangrim's people in Karag Dum. The settlement is protected by Runes of Concealment.

HAMMER OF FATE

The mighty magical warhammer used by King Thangrim, said to be one of the artefacts bequeathed to the dwarfs by the Ancestor-Gods.

HANGED MAN, THE

Inn located in Blutdorf, just as unpleasant as the rest of the village.

HANS MULLER

The Divine One. A filthy, unkempt and quite, quite mad mage whose Spell of Translocation went wrong so he ended up the Ruined City in the Chaos Wastes where he meets Gotrek, Felix and Snorri.

HARGRIM

Son of Thangrim Firebeard, a massive broad-shouldered dwarf and leader of the Tunnel Fighters at Karag Dum.

HAUNTED CITADEL

An abandoned slann fortress in the swamps near Crannog Mere.

HEF (I)

Trapper, hired by the von Diehl family to guide them across the Border Princes. Felix first encounters him in the trading post where Hef is harassing Kirsten.

HEF (II)

One of two twin sewerjack knifemen who work with Gotrek & Felix in the Nuln sewers (see also Spider).

HEINZ

Owner of the Blind Pig and old mercenary friend of Gotrek. He spent ten years as a Halberdier and rose to the rank of captain during Karl Franz's campaigns against orcs to the East. Sports a bad leg after being stamped on by a Bretonnian charger at the Battle of Red Orc Pass.

HENRIK RICHTER

A bandit chief who has forged the bands of outlaws together in a bid to defeat the invading horde led by Ugrek Manflyer.

HESKIT ONE EYE

Master Warp Engineer of Clan Skyre, he leads the attack on Nuln's College of Engineering in an attempt to steal a steam tank.

HIERONYMOUS OSTWALD, COUNT

Secretary to Her Serene Highness, Countess Emmanuelle. Friend of Drexler's.

MALAKAI MAKAISSON

Thought to be the best engineer who ever lived. He was drummed out of the Guild of Engineers after the first airship fiasco and became a slayer. He built the *Spirit of Grungni* and is responsible for devising many other ingenious munitions and weapons also.

He is another shaven-headed dwarf, with the customary red dyed crest and a short white beard. When flying the airship, he wears a short leather jerkin with sheepskin collar, a leather cap with long ear flaps and a cut-out for his crest to fit through and thick optical lenses engraved with crosshairs.

He is originally from Dwimmerdim Vale, way up north - an isolated place, which is thought to account for his somewhat odd accent.

I**INDESTRUCTIBLE, THE**

Malakai's first flying ship. Big as a sailing ship, the fuselage was over a hundred paces long and the ship itself could fly at ten leagues an hour. It crashed and was destroyed utterly.

IRON DOOR, THE

Tavern in Karak Kadrin. A reputed hangout for slayers, renegades, and other lowlifes.

IVAN STRAGOV

Ulrika's father. A huge burly man with a long white beard and a shaved head except for a top knot. He is a Kislevite March Warden, in command of a thousand men.

Ivan took care of Borek, Gotrek and Snorri on their return from the Chaos Wastes on their first mission to find Karag Dum and thus earned their respect and friendship.

IXIX

Goblin shaman, serving under Ugrek Manflyer, considered mad even by greenskin standards.

IZAK GROTTLE

Obese Clan Moulder Packmaster, Grottle's appetite for food is rivaled only by his appetite for power.

J**JOHANN ZAUBERLICH**

A wizard and companion to Aldred Keppler. When not adventuring, he is a lecturer at the University of Nuln.

JULES GASCOIGNE

A Bretonnian scout originating from Quenelles.

He was hired by



Aldred Keppler to guide their party to Karag Eight Peaks.

JUSTINE

A Chaos Warrior of Khorne, leader of the beast-men that destroyed Kleindorf.

K

KARAG DUM

Lost dwarfhold in the Chaos Wastes and formerly one of the greatest dwarf cities, the mightiest in the northern lands in fact. Lost during the last great incursion of Chaos before the reign of Magnus the Pious.

KARAGHUI

Magic sword, originally wielded by the Templar Raphael. It was discovered by Felix, in Thulgul the troll's treasure hoard.

KARAK EIGHT PEAKS

Ancient dwarf stronghold that fell to the goblins three thousand years ago.

KARAK KADRIN

'Slayer Keep', a dwarf stronghold that overlooks the Peak Pass in the World's Edge Mountains. Karak Kadrin has never fallen, partly due to the presence of the Shrine of Grinnir which attracts slayers from across the Old World.

KAT

A young girl with a distinctive white streak in her black hair. She was found by Gotrek & Felix in the ruins of Kleindorf.

KELMAIN BLACKSTAFF

An albino Tzeentchian sorcerer of immense power, he is also the identical twin of Lhoigor.

Both he and his brother served as advisors to Arek Daemonclaw and also had a hand in the corruption of the dragon, Skjalandir. Kelmain carries a staff of ebony and silver, which he found in ruins in the Chaos Wastes. He and Lhoigor are also responsible for opening the Paths of Old Ones and unwittingly putting the whole of the Old World in jeopardy by doing so.

KIRSTEN

Indentured to Frau Winter, part of the von Diehl entourage. Felix rescues her from the attentions of Hef, Kell and Lars in the trading post and she becomes his first love.

KISLEV

Reputed to be a land of ice and snow where winter never lifts. In actuality, it is a land of rolling plains and thick forests of pine which has a brief but intense summer and a long, cold winter. Famed for its horsemen.

KIARA

Culum's pretty and somewhat inquisitive wife. Her attempt to wheedle information out of Felix only succeeds in earning him the enmity of her husband.

KLEINDORF

Small village on the Flensburg road, deep in the Drakwald.

L

LARS

Trapper. Felix manages to enamour himself of Lars by smashing his teeth during a fight in the trading post.

LHOIGOR GOLDENROD

A tall, vulpine albino sorcerer of immense power, he is evenly matched with his identical twin, Kelmain. Both Lhoigor and his brother come from the strange Weirdblood tribe and from birth they were marked by the favour of the Changer of Ways, by being born with teeth and claws so they could have meat as their first

MAXIMILLIAN SCHRIEBER

Max is a powerful mage and as such, he has become an invaluable ally to Gotrek and Felix in their recent adventures. He was expelled from the Imperial College of Magicians for showing an unhealthy interest in Chaos but found a sympathetic sponsor for his research in the form of the Elector Count of Middenheim. A tall, good-looking man with a well-trimmed beard, he is about ten years older than Felix. He and the other man also share a mutual interest in the same woman, Ulrika Straghov, and this has led to a few complications recently. Max is also a member of the mysterious Golden Brotherhood, an order dedicated to fighting Chaos, though the details are vague.



meal. Lhoigor carries a gold-sheathed staff which was unearthed in the Ruins of Ulangor in the Chaos Wastes.

LONELY TOWER, THE

Built on top of an old coal mine, this is the secret location where Malakai and his engineers build the *Spirit of Grungni*. It comes under attack by Grey Seer Thanquol and his minions as they try to steal the airship.

LORD OF DRAGONS

One of the Undying Ones, ghostly elven wizards who sacrificed themselves in order to save Ulthuan and their people. He and his brethren are mighty mages, responsible for maintaining the web of spells that keeps the island continent of Ulthuan afloat and it is he who brings the danger facing the island to Teclis's attention.

LOTHAR KRYPTMAN

Alchemist, living in Fredericksburg. A weirdroot addict, he assists Gotrek & Felix after their encounter in the Sleeping Dragon.

LOTHERN

Great elvish harbour city where the Phoenix King holds court. Teclis and his brother Tyrion have a mansion built on the side of the highest hill overlooking the city.

LURKERS WITHIN

Ancient spider daemons who guard the Haunted Citadel in Albion. They are naturally resistant to magic.

LURK SNITCHTONGUE

Thanquol's henchling and a former Clawleader. He has a warpstone powered communication amulet hammered into his skull by his master and sneaks aboard the *Spirit of Grungni* at his master's command. An encounter with a warpstorm while onboard leaves him somewhat changed though.

M

MAGDA FREYADOTTER

Cleric of Valaya, member of Belegar's expedition to Karag Eight Peaks. She warns Gotrek and his party of the dangers awaiting them beneath the Peaks.

MAGDALENA

Mysterious silver-haired girl with golden eyes, a captive of Count Hrothgar.

MAGRIG ONE EYE

The fearsome guardian of the Temple of the Old Ones. He was the mightiest of the giants of old before his brain became clouded and he acquired the lust for manflesh. He lost an eye in a ferocious battle to the death with his brother

and is worshipped as a god by the local orc tribes.

MANFRED VON DIEHL

Nephew and heir to Gottfried von Diehl, considered a brilliant, if blasphemous playwright among the cognoscenti of Altdorf.

MIDDENHEIM

The City of the White Wolf. The central heights of this mountain top city are dominated by the Elector Count's Palace and the mighty Temple of Ulric. It started life as a fortress but then a fair sized community sprung up around the heights as well.

MIKAL'S FORD

Site of the mustering of the Kislevite forces.

MORAKAI

Thangrim Firebeard's other son who died out in the wastes in the cave surrounded by the bodies of the twenty beastmen he'd killed.

MURDO MACBALDOCH

The old but surprisingly tough chieftain of Crannog Mere. He is also a member of the Order of Truthsayers of Albion and a canny man. He wears trews and a pleated cloak of a tartan colour that blends into the undergrowth and sports the same strange tattoos that all his people do, tattoos that bear a marked resemblance to some of the engravings in the Paths of the Old Ones.

N

NULN

Large city-state in the southern Empire and former capital. Ruled by Countess Emmanuelle von Liebewitz.

O

OGHAM RINGS

Great stone circles, which attract dark magical energy in Albion and somehow render it harmless.

OLAF

Cultist sent to kill Felix in Praag. A short, stocky man with a high rasping voice. He accompanied Sergei and was considered the brains of the pair.

OLD ONES

A race of gods older than the gods. Some claim they created the world, others that they never existed at all.

OLGAR OLGERSOON

Also known as Olgar Goldgrabber because of



SPIRIT OF GRUNGNI, THE

The second airship built in secret by Malakai, it is even bigger than its ill-fated predecessor, the *Indestructible*. It is made up of two main parts: a massive, many skinned balloon full of lift-gas cells, and a smaller, heavily armed and armoured cabin suspended beneath it. There are weapons cupolas embedded into the fuselage of the main ship and it has many portholes and a massive glass window at the front helm to allow a good view from the command deck. Powered by 'black water' engines and a massive propellor at the stern, the airship is capable of flying over two hundred leagues per day. Malakai wanted to call it the Unstoppable but much to the relief of the many dwarfs who serve onboard, he was persuaded against it!

his miserly tendencies. He funds the expedition to the Chaos Wastes.

ORACLE OF TRUTHSAYERS

A tall woman, sharp faced but still beautiful. She is a respected wise woman throughout Albion and lives with her guardians in sacred caves up in the mountains. She has been gifted with visions though had to pay a heavy price for the power. Teclis is told to seek her out and ask her advice on how to close the Paths of the Old Ones.

P

PATHS OF THE OLD ONES

An ancient network of strange interdimensional corridors with nexus points in places all over the world. A very dangerous place indeed.

PAVEL

Tzeentchian cultist, sent to assassinate Enrik.

PRAAG

City in northern Kislev on the River Lynsk. Kislev's second most powerful City State.



SNORRI NOSEBITER

Snorri is a massive, well-muscled and immensely stupid slayer. His trademark 'crest' is made up of nails, which have been painted different colours and driven into his skull and this may account for his lack of wits. His beard is cropped short and his nose has been broken so many times that it's shapeless. One ear is cauliflowered, while the other one is missing altogether, leaving only a hole in the side of his head. He has a huge ring through his nose and is heavily scarred and tattooed.

He is one of only three survivors of the first ill-fated mission to find Karag Dum, and at some point in the past, there has been a tragedy involving a dwarf woman and child, which has led Snorri to take the Oath.

Snorri fights with a hammer and axe and enjoys the simple things in life – drinking and killing, and he is very good at both!

R

RANAGOR

A renowned breeder of gryphons who raised Teclis's beast from an egg she found on the slopes of Mount Brood.

RED ROSE, THE

Large brothel in Praag, visited by Felix, Gotrek and the other slayers during their 'investigations'.

ROCHE

Adolphus Krieger's hulking, pockmarked henchman. His family has served Krieger for generations.

RODRIK

A huge, golden-maned knight and bodyguard to Countess Gabriella. Son of Rudgar.

RUDGAR

Count of Waldenhof. A tall, florid aristocrat and brother-in-law to the Countess Gabriella.

RUINED CITY, THE

An ancient city in the Chaos Wastes where everything is built on a giant scale. There is a massive ziggurat in the middle of it which is home to harpies and something far worse.

S

SERGEI

Cultist sent with Olaf to kill Felix in Praag. A tall, heavily built man with a deep voice. His lack of wits make him no less dangerous.

SHIENARA

One of Teclis's female companions. She and her twin, Malyria, are courtesans.

SIOBHAIN

One of the Oracle's Guardians and an accomplished warrior. She is almost as tall as Felix and tattoos cover her face and arms in the style of her people.

SKITCH

Izak Grottle's henchling. A hunchback who wears glasses, Skitch is reputed to be the best ratmaster of his day.

SKJALANDIR

A huge and ancient dragon, it is first encountered by the *Spirit of Grungni* whilst travelling to Kislev. Its long sleep had been disturbed by Kelmain and Lhoigor, who drove Warpstone charms into its flesh, corrupting it. Skjalandir made its nest in a system of caverns below the

Dragon Mountain along the Old High Road.

SKULL MACE OF MALARAK

A weapon wielded by Grume of the Nightfang. Made of some odd metal, its head is shaped like the skull of a daemon and the empty eye-sockets glow with an infernal light. It freezes the limbs and chills the hearts of those who face it.

SLEEPING DRAGON, THE
Tavern in Fredericksburg.

SPHERE OF DESTINY

Strange apparatus Teclis found in the ruins of an ancient Cathayan city nearly two centuries ago. A massive sphere of bronze, engraved with strange runes, he uses it to augment his powers when performing a particular spell of viewing.

SPIDER

One of two twin sewerjack knifemen Gotrek and Felix work with in Nuln. He is distinguished from his brother by the spider tattooed onto his cheek (see also Hef II).

STANDING STONES INN, THE
Coach house on the Bögenhafen road.

STEG

Dwarf slayer, met by Felix and Gotrek in the Iron Door tavern. His shame lies in being

THANQUOL

A skaven magelord and master schemer whose cunning plans always seem to be thwarted - usually by his own paranoia! Pre-eminent among the Grey Seers, the feared and potent skaven magicians who rank just below the Council of Thirteen itself, Thanquol is a mighty mage indeed, especially when he augments his powers by liberal use of the powdered warpstone snuff he keeps in a manskin pouch at his belt.

Pale-furred with pink, blind-seeming eyes, he sports the horns which signify his calling, and the favour of his master, the Horned Rat. Thanquol loathes and fears Gotrek Gurnisson in equal measures, and holds the slayer and his human companion entirely responsible for all his recent setbacks. Still, he is determined that he will-will have his revenge, no matter how long it takes!

BONERIPPER I, II & II

The succession of somewhat unfortunate rat-ogre bodyguards Thanquol obtains from Clan Moulder at great cost.



caught as a thief, though he seems little concerned about further tarnishing his name.

STEW, THE

The sewers beneath Nuln where Gotrek, Felix and the other sewerjacks patrol. The tunnels themselves are of Khazilad workmanship with high vaulted ceilings more reminiscent of a cathedral than a sewage system.

T

TASIRION

An elf mage who broke elvish law by unlocking the Paths of the Old Ones. The venture ended in his ultimate madness and his fate is considered a warning to others who might attempt to do the same. He has left some documented accounts about the Paths which Teclis consults.

TECLIS

A mighty elven arch-mage and twin to Tyrion. In his youth, he was frail and sickly but then he learned to strengthen himself with spells and potions so now the only visible legacy of this

former weakness is a slight limp in his left leg. He bears the War Crown of Saphery and the staff of Lileath, artefacts of considerable power.

His first encounter with Gotrek Gurnisson is within the Paths of the Old Ones and it is not an auspicious one.

TEMPLE OF THE OLD ONES

A massive stepped pyramid in Albion with seven huge levels, each level marked with ancient runes.

TERROR, THE

The Great Destroyer, a Blutdrengrik, the Bane of Grung - a bloodthirster of Khorne!

A daemon of Chaos summoned by Skathloc in the last days of the siege of Karag Dum. Huge, more than twice the height of a man, it is winged with ruddy red skin and has the mark of the Blood God on its brow. It is armed with whip and axe.

ULRIKA MAGDOVA STRAGHOV

A beautiful, blonde Kislevite and an expert swordswoman. Her father is March Warden of an estate bordering the troll country and she is the love of Felix Jaeger's life for a while.

THANGRIM FIREBEARD

The leader of the dwarfs at Karag Dum. An old but still powerful dwarf with long red hair and beard striped with white, he carries the Hammer of Fate.

THULGUL

A hideously mutated troll, the guardian of the lost hoard of Karag Eight Peaks.

TROLLSLAYER'S DOOM, THE

The alternate name Felix considered for his 'My travels with Gotrek' Journals.

TRUTHSAYERS

The order of wizards of Albion. The formation of the order of Truthsayers apparently dates back to the legendary times when the Old Ones walked the earth.

TWISTED PATHS, THE

Spoken of by Tasirion, they are said to be where the work of the Old Ones intersect with bubbles of pure Chaos.

TYRION

Teclis's twin brother. A handsome warrior and consort to the Everqueen. The deadliest elf warrior in twenty generations.

TZARINA KATARIN

'The Ice Queen', ruler of Kislev. An accomplished mage and warrior, her nickname derives from her cool demeanour as well as her mastery of Ice Magic.

U

UGREK MANFLAYER

A massive orc, who has united the greenskin tribes near Karak Kadrin. He is known as far as Altdorf, such is his reputation. He is said to skin his captives and make the skins into cloaks. He wields a magical cleaver.

ULGO

A witch hunter and member of the Cult of Ulric. He accuses Gotrek & Felix of conspiring with Chaos.

ULLI ULLISSON

A dwarf slayer, who joins Felix and Gotrek's quest to slay the dragon Skjalindir. His freshly shaven head suggests that he is only a recent convert to the slayer cult, and his manner is that of a nervous braggart rather than a truly brave warrior.



ULTHUAN

The island continent of the elves, raised and held above the sea by potent magic.

UNGRIM IRONFIST

Slayer-king of Karak Kadrin. Due to the vow taken by his ancestor Baragor, Ungrim is bound both by his oaths as king and slayer, and tries to balance both as best he can.

UNSINKABLE, THE

Malakai's famous steamship and the biggest one ever seen. Two hundred paces long and weighing over five hundred tons, it could sail at over three leagues an hour and had steam-powered gatling turrets for protection. It hit a rock and sank.

V

VAN NIEK'S EMPORIUM

Shop in Nuln that specialises in rare and exotic books and other artefacts. Reputedly, it also serves as a government front as well.

VERMAK SKAB

Warlord of Clan Skab and Lurk's distant cousin. Sent to lead the attack on Nuln but tragically meets his end in a terrible accident involving a loaded crossbow and an exploding donkey!

VILEBROTH NULL

Low Abbot of the Plague Monks of Clan Pestilens who tries to bring about the downfall of Nuln by using the Cauldron of a Thousand Poxes to spread the plague.

VILLEM KOZINSKI

Younger brother of the Duke Enrik. His diplomatic manner makes him a more suitable candidate for the throne than his brother, and he acts as a foil to Enrik's abruptness.

VOORMAN

Count Hrothgar's pet wizard and a member of the Order of Tzeentch.

VAREK VARIGSSON

Son of Varg of the Clan Grimnar and nephew of Borek Forkbeard.

Plump and civilised looking, his well-groomed beard reaches almost to the floor and he wears thick glasses. A scholar like his uncle, he diligently keeps a diary of all the events that take place. He is equipped with bombs made by Malakai, and the engineer also taught him how to fly a gyrocopter, a skill he uses to great effect against the dragon Skjalandir.

W

WALDENSCHLOSSE

Castle which sits above Waldenhof and home to Rudgar, Count of Waldenhof.

WHITE BOAR, THE

A tavern in Praag where Gotrek, Felix and the rest stayed during the Siege of Praag.

WOLFGANG KRASSNER

Man killed by Felix in a duel, resulting in his expulsion from university.

WOLFGANG LAMMEL

Decadent fop and Slaaneshi cultist. His father owns the Sleeping Dragon in Fredricksburg, where he hangs out with his equally unpleasant friends.

WORLD'S EDGE MOUNTAINS

Immense range of mountains that mark the eastern boundary of the Empire and the Old World, believed in ancient times to be the edge of the world itself.

Z

ZARKHUL

A prophet and the uniter of the orc tribes of Albion. He intends to lead them into the great Waaargh to reclaim the Temple of Old Ones.





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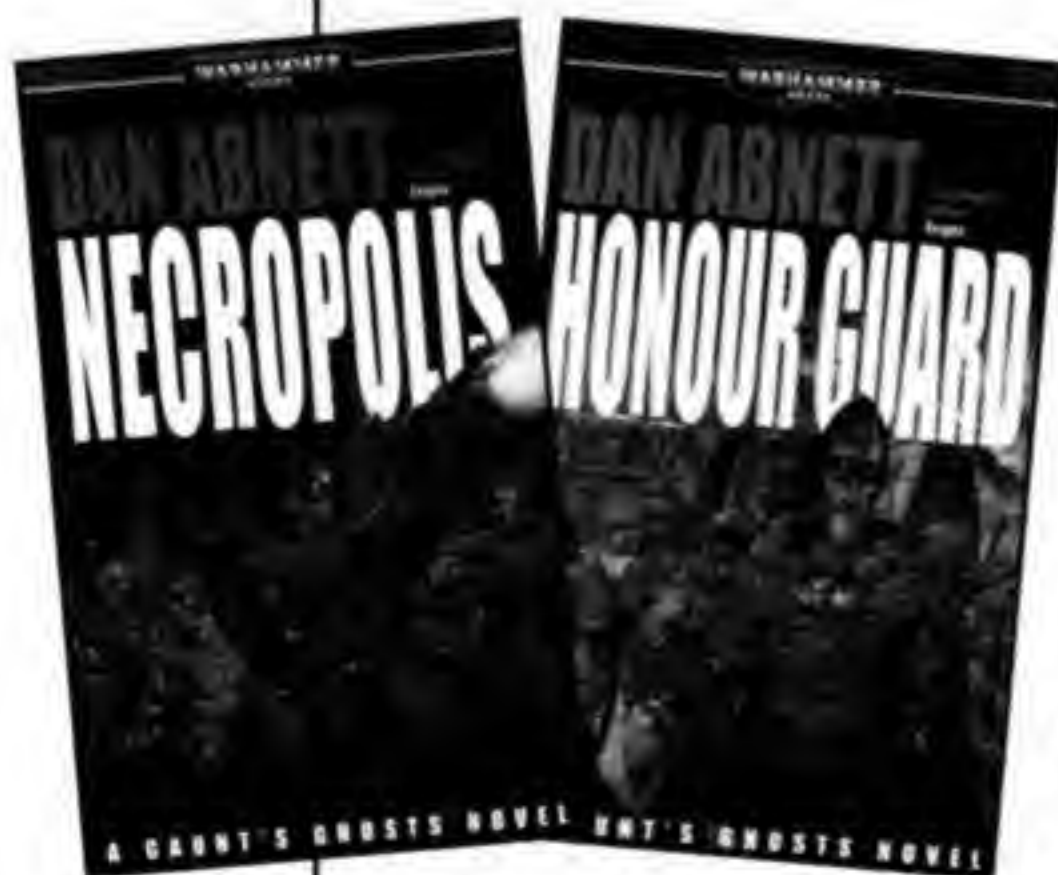


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'Get off my ship!' he bellowed. Then Gotrek emerged from the shadow of the prow. He raced among the orcs chopping left and right with the axe. Nothing could stop him. He reaped lives like a peasant scything corn, clove through the greenskin ranks like a runaway chariot, scattered his foes like a whirlwind scatters leaves. It was as if some ancient dwarfen god of war had emerged onto the blood-slick decks and strove to avenge his people on their ancient enemies. Goblins threw themselves over the guardrails into the shark-infested waters to escape him. Orcs held their ground and died. The dwarfen marines, moments before in disarray, suddenly took heart. Their line stiffened, they threw themselves forward in Gotrek's wake, and tore into the ever-increasing number of orcs that still dropped onto their decks from the boarding nets.

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